



GRANDPA'S
LITTLE GIRLS
AT SCHOOL
ALICE TURNER CURTIS



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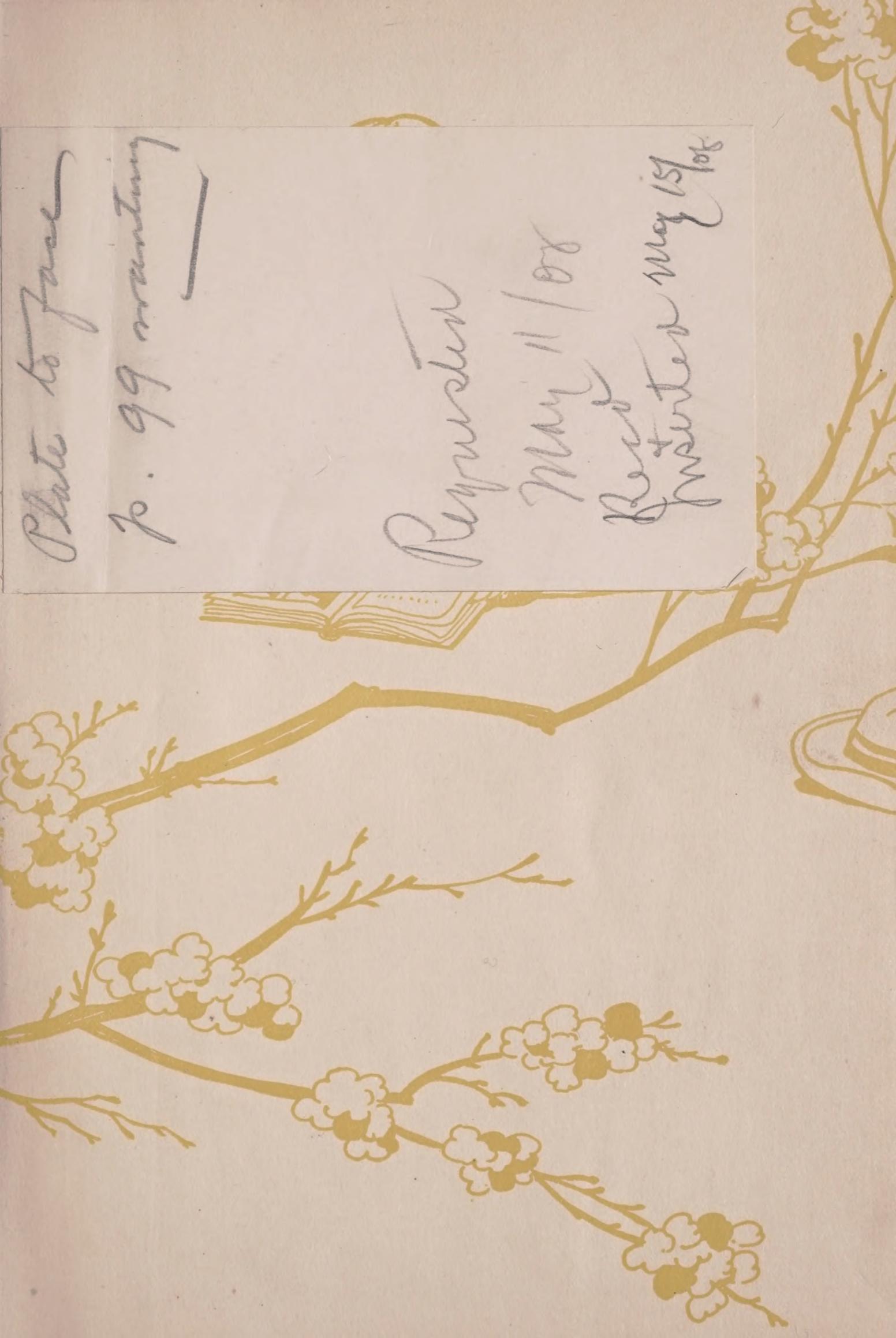
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THEY WERE REALLY OUT OF DOORS

Grandpa's Little Girls at School

By

Alice Turner Curtis

Author of "Marjorie's Way"

"Grandpa's Little Girls" etc.

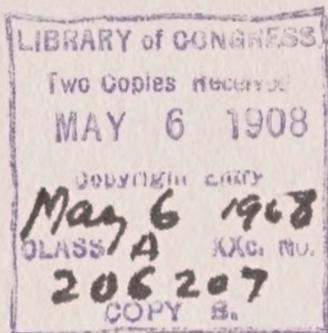
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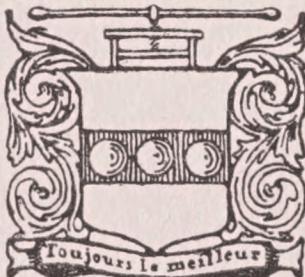
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Contents

I.	IMPORTANT NEWS	-	-	-	-	7
II.	A SURPRISE PICNIC	-	-	-	-	17
III.	JIMMIE IN DANGER	-	-	-	-	32
IV.	GETTING READY TO RUN AWAY	-	-	-	-	43
V.	THE TRIP TO THE SCHOOLHOUSE	-	-	-	-	56
VI.	THE RUNAWAYS	-	-	-	-	65
VII.	THE FIRST WEEK AT SCHOOL	-	-	-	-	76
VIII.	A DIFFICULT LESSON	-	-	-	-	87
IX.	INITIATED INTO THE "J. F. F."	-	-	-	-	97
X.	A "U. S." PARTY	-	-	-	-	107
XI.	JIMMIE KILLS A LYNX	-	-	-	-	117
XII.	THE YOUNGEST GIRL ON THE TEAM	-	-	-	-	125
XIII.	THE END OF THE TERM	-	-	-	-	133
XIV.	A SKATING CARNIVAL	-	-	-	-	143
XV.	LOST ON THE RIVER	-	-	-	-	151
XVI.	MYRTLE GREEN'S SURPRISE	-	-	-	-	162
XVII.	AN OVERTURNED BOAT	-	-	-	-	173
XVIII.	ROSE MASON'S BIRTHDAY	-	-	-	-	185

Illustrations

Grandpa's Little Girls at School

CHAPTER I

IMPORTANT NEWS

MR. EBEN BEAN stood in the doorway of the big barn at Pine Tree farm and watched Sister and Lamb as they came running across the yard.

"Oh, Mr. Eben Bean," exclaimed Lamb, breathlessly, "what do you think has happened?"

Mr. Bean smiled and nodded. "I guess I know," he responded. "Your father saw two deer feeding with the cattle in the lower pasture and he reckons they are the ones that you and Sister tamed, and that he set free last summer."

"Oh, no," said Sister, "it is a great deal more important than that."

"I want to know!" said Mr. Bean in apparent surprise. "Well, then, have those foxes your pa let loose been snooping around here again after our young chickens?"

Both the little girls shook their heads.

"Worse than that," whispered Sister.

"The Woodyear family ain't burned out of house and home, be they?" questioned Mr. Bean.

"Mr. Eben Bean, it's something about us," announced Lamb mournfully, "something dreadful!"

Mr. Bean took a new grip on his hoe handle and endeavored to look serious.

"What is it?" he inquired. "Have you begun to cut your wisdom teeth at your age? or what other trouble has come upon you?"

"It's all because I'm 'most thirteen," wailed Sister. "And because I'm almost eleven," echoed Lamb.

Mr. Bean shook his head. "We all have to grow old," he responded.

"And they are going to send us away to school," both the children exclaimed.

"I want to know," said Mr. Bean.

"Yes," continued Sister, "my mother has been writing to a school that she went to when she was my age, Miss Wilson's school, and Miss Wilson says she will take us. Isn't it dreadful?"

"And Grandmother Newman thinks it is for our good," said Lamb.

Mr. Eben Bean looked very serious. "I've heard

something of this before," he said slowly, "and I guess you feel about the way Abitha did when she went to school."

"Did Miss Abitha ever go away to school?" inquired Lamb in evident surprise.

"Yes, indeed. How did you suppose she learned all that she knows?" said Mr. Bean. "Yes, she went away to school for four years, and it beat all how much she learned. She used to come home every vacation, and had the best times a girl ever had, I guess. But she didn't like the notion of going away at first."

"But we can go to school to Miss Abitha," insisted Lamb, "she teaches us lovely things, and we have the nicest times."

"Well," said Mr. Bean, "I guess, maybe, that Abitha is a little lacking in discipline. She's apt to put off school for picnics 'most any time, ain't she? Seems to think that having a real good time is more important than learning the multiplication table," and Mr. Bean chuckled as if amused at the remembrance of his daughter's methods of teaching.

"But that won't do at all," he continued more seriously; "girls of your age must learn all sorts of things, and your mother knows just where to send you."

"But we don't want to go," they both exclaimed; "and Grandfather Newman thinks it's foolish for us to go," added Sister.

Eben chuckled again. "I'll wager he does," he said; "he'll miss you a sight; we shall all miss you," he added handsomely, "but I guess it's the right thing to do," and Mr. Bean went back into the barn and left the two little girls.

Sister looked at Lamb and exclaimed, "There! didn't I tell you that all the grown-ups would say just the same thing. That's just the way our father talks, and it's the way Miss Abitha talks, and the way grandmother talks."

"Grandfather don't," Lamb reminded her.

"No, and he was wishing this very morning that I was a boy. He said, 'Well, if you'd only been "Peter" I could have kept you at home.' Isn't it dreadful to have to go away from everything," concluded Sister.

"We won't have to go for a whole month yet," responded Lamb hopefully. "Mother said that she should go with us."

"But she won't stay with us," said Constance.

"Mother says that there will be nice girls about our age," continued Lamb.

"Lamb Eunice Newman! I should think you wanted to go to school. To go and leave this lovely place, and our mother and father, and grandfather and everybody," declared Constance accusingly.

"No, I don't, Sister," asserted Lamb, "but I s'pose we might as well make the best of it."

"I shan't!" announced the elder sister; "I've made my mind up just what I'm going to do."

"What?" questioned Lamb anxiously.

"That Miss Wilson who keeps the school wrote to mother that unless we began the term she could not take us until the next term. And mother says that we are to start so as to be at Newville a day or two before the term begins."

"Yes!" said Lamb, breathlessly.

"Well, don't you see if we don't go in time to begin with the others Miss Wilson won't have us until January."

Lamb nodded, and Constance continued, "I thought it all out last night and I have a lovely plan. The day before mother plans to take us to Newville we must run away and stay until after Miss Wilson's school begins. Then we will come home."

"But our mother won't like it," suggested Lamb.

"No-o," said Sister; "perhaps she won't at first;

but she said she hated to have us go, so maybe she will be pleased."

"She won't be pleased," said Lamb; "and if we run away in September we will have to go in January."

"Perhaps we won't," responded Sister hopefully; "perhaps I can think of something else by that time."

"Well, where will we run to?" asked Lamb. "We will have to stay away two or three days."

"Yes, a week, maybe," answered Sister, "and I know a lovely place to stay, but I shan't tell you where, Lamb, till just the day we start, because you might forget and tell and spoil everything. But it's a lovely place and it will be a good deal like one of Miss Abitha's picnics, only longer."

Lamb's face brightened. "Oh, Sister," she exclaimed, "I wish it was time to go right off."

"We'll have to get ready," said Sister. "Of course we'll have to have lots of things to eat to last two or three days, and there will be other things," and Sister looked very serious and important.

"Sister," asked Lamb, "tell me just one thing: do we have to go a long ways off?"

"No," answered Sister; "but don't ask me any more questions. We had better begin saving cake right away. We can put cake and cookies in the boxes

where we keep our Sunday hats. And the day we start we must remember to take some eggs."

"And some summer sweetings and plums," added Lamb.

The little girls were so intent on their plans that they did not notice Miss Abitha as she came across the yard. She laughed at their surprised looks when she called out a gay "Good-morning, young ladies."

Miss Abitha was unusually tall, and she was older than Mrs. Newman, the children's mother, but she was always so interested in all that Constance and Lamb enjoyed, and had made so many pleasant plans for them during their two years stay at their grandfather's, that she seemed like a companion and friend rather than an elderly school-teacher; and they now welcomed her warmly and made a place for her to sit beside them in the sunny doorway.

"Your grandmother tells me that it is all settled about your going to Miss Wilson's," began Miss Abitha; "and I must tell you some of the good times I had when I went to school."

"Good times," echoed Constance doubtfully.

"Yes, indeed. Do you suppose twenty nice girls living together don't have good times? You just wait and see. I was fourteen when I went."

"I'm not quite eleven," said Lamb; "and my grandmother thinks that is most too young, but father thinks I must go with Sister."

"Of course you must," declared Miss Abitha, "you will be the pet of the school. I went to Miss Wilson's school myself."

"She must be dreadful old," suggested Sister.

Miss Abitha laughed. "This is the 'young Miss Wilson'; she is nearly sixty I believe. Her elder sister used to be the head of the school. I was a very tall girl for fourteen, and the girls used to make up rhymes about me. One was:

" 'Tallest ever seen is our own Abitha Bean.
She's a brick and she's a scholar,
Hope she won't grow any taller.' "

"I shouldn't want strange girls to make up verses about me," said Sister.

"Then there is another good reason for you to go away to school," laughed Miss Abitha.

"Perhaps we shan't have to go after all," said Lamb. "We may be sick or something," she added hastily, as Sister gave her an accusing look.

"Did the girls make up any more verses about you, Miss Abitha?" questioned Sister.

"I don't remember," responded Miss Abitha, "but we used to have so many good times that now and then we did not have very good lessons, and then we would be called into Miss Wilson's room and she would talk to us. Sometimes pretty sharply. One afternoon I had made up my mind to study, and shut myself into my room, but every girl who came down the corridor would rap or run in a moment. So I took a large square of white paper and printed on it:

"'Please pass by and only grin,
For Abitha toils within'" —

I fastened it on the outside of my door and after that I wasn't bothered, and I had very good recitations the next day."

"We'd both rather go to school to you, Miss Abitha," said Lamb, sitting a little closer to her valued companion.

Miss Abitha's sunny face grew serious. She put her arm about the little girl's shoulder.

"I don't know what we shall do without you," she said. "I expect Miss Wilson will have to take us all; for we shall be as lonesome as can be, while you children will be making new friends and forgetting all about everything at Pine Tree farm."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed both the little girls, and, as Miss Abitha arose and said she must hurry home, Constance said with an air of mystery, "You wait and see. We may not go to school after all."

At this Miss Abitha laughed again, and looking down at her little friends she said :

"I'll race you to the house. One! Two! Three and off!" and the tall woman and the two girls started swiftly across the yard.

Grandmother Newman and Mrs. Henry Newman were sitting on the side porch with their sewing, and, as they saw the flying figures coming toward them they began to laugh.

"I don't know what Abitha will do when the children go," said young Mrs. Newman.

"I don't know what any of us will do," declared grandmother, "here we have tried every way to make them love this place and be happy here, and now that they can't bear to think of leaving we have got to send them away," and grandmother sighed and began to hunt for her handkerchief.

CHAPTER II

A SURPRISE PICNIC

WHEN Mr. and Mrs. Newman decided to send their little daughters to Newville to Miss Wilson's home school, Grandmother Newman at once declared that each of the children would have to have an entire new outfit.

"Gingham and flannel dresses are all very well here at home," she said, "but we want our girls to be as well-dressed as their playmates, so we must set right at work and make them some new dresses."

Young Mrs. Newman smiled. "They will need more clothes, being away from home," she responded; "but I remember that Miss Wilson always insisted on her pupils being very plainly dressed."

But grandmother had her way, and enough blue cashmere was bought to make both Sister and Lamb a dress. They were each to have dresses of fine checked serge, also, and, greatly to Sister's delight, her mother decided that she might have some pretty cheviot waists made to wear with part worn skirts.

Then the village milliner was visited, and when

Sister found that her new hat was really to have two blue wings on it she almost made up her mind that going away to school was not such a bad idea after all.

"But we can wear our new things at home just as well," she decided.

Lamb shook her head. "No, we can't," she announced, "if we don't go the last of September they will save our clothes for us to wear when we go in January."

"We won't go in January, Lamb Eunice Newman. Didn't I say that I'd think of something so we wouldn't have to go? We can run away this time and next time we can do something else."

"Sister!" exclaimed Lamb, "I know that it will be lovely to run away, but I've thought of an easier plan; where we won't have to take blankets and things," for Sister, with great forethought, had told her small sister that a blanket or two had best be taken on their proposed trip.

"What is it?" questioned Sister.

"It's this," and Lamb's face dimpled happily at the thought that at last she was the one to make a clever suggestion as to a way to take them out of their impending trouble; "to make believe that we had just as soon go away to school as not, and go. Then, just as

soon as mother leaves us at Miss Wilson's we will begin to wear our best clothes every day, and act just as bad as we can. "So bad," and Lamb stopped and drew a long breath, and then concluded, "so bad that Miss Wilson won't let us stay there, but will send us straight home."

Sister looked at Lamb wonderingly, but she finally nodded her approval. "We might do that in January," she responded thoughtfully, "but I don't see just what we could do to make her send us home."

"We could find out as soon as we got there what she didn't want us to do and then do it," replied Lamb.

"I guess our folks would rather we ran away," decided Constance, "but they know that we don't want to go, and I don't see why they make us."

"Mr. Eben Bean says the reason is that they want us to grow up a credit to them," suggested Lamb.

Constance sniffed scornfully, "of course we'd do that anyway," she declared, "and here everything is just exactly the way we want it."

Grandfather Newman came around the corner just in time to hear this announcement, and his pleasant face beamed with pleasure. "That's good news," he declared.

"Oh, dear grandfather," exclaimed Lamb, "do you want us to go away and leave this lovely place, and leave you?"

"And only come home for horrid short vacations," added Sister.

"Of course I don't! The idea!" said grandfather.

"Then we won't go," exclaimed both the girls.

"Wait, wait!" said grandfather. "I am not the one to decide this affair. It is for your mother and father to say. If I had my way you wouldn't go one step."

"You tell our father and mother that you won't let them send us," suggested Sister; "they are your children and they would have to mind you."

This seemed to amuse grandfather very much, but after a while he looked serious again, and said that Miss Wilson had a fine school and he expected that both the girls would have such a good time there that they would be sorry when vacation time came.

While he was talking Miss Abitha came hurrying up the path. Miss Abitha always seemed in a hurry, for she had so many pleasant things to do and enjoyed doing them so much that the days were not half long enough for her. Her face was all smiles, and as she drew near the little group on the porch she called out, "Oh, Mr. Newman, you are just the one I want

to see. Can I have old Lion and the carryall to-morrow?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Newman, "of course you can, if you'll promise to fetch them back when you get through with them."

Miss Abitha nodded. "And I want to borrow Jimmie Woodyear too," she continued.

Jimmie Woodyear was the son of a neighbor, and had been regularly employed at Pine Tree farm for the past two years. He helped Mr. Eben Bean in caring for the stock, and was a great favorite with all the Newman family.

"Well, I don't know about lending Jimmie," said Mr. Newman, "you will want to borrow Sister and Lamb if I don't look sharp."

Miss Abitha laughed. "That is just what I want to do," she responded; "you old folks are all so busy with getting in the crops, and making dresses for our girls to take away, that you seem to forget that we young people are not having any good times. So I have made a nice little plan, just for Sister and Lamb and Jimmie and me, and I'm not going to tell what it is. But to-morrow morning we will start off bright and early and you need not expect us home until sunset."

"Is it a picnic, Miss Abitha?" asked Lamb eagerly,

while Sister's face was shining with delighted anticipation.

"Well," responded Miss Abitha slowly, "some people might call it a picnic because we shall take our luncheon and eat it out-of-doors. Perhaps, we might call it a 'surprise picnic,' because no one but I will know where we are going or what we are going to do."

"It will be fine, I know it will," exclaimed Sister, hardly able to sit still; "you do think of the nicest things, Miss Abitha."

"I didn't think about your going to Miss Wilson's school, and next year at this time you will be saying that going to school was the nicest thing that ever happened to you," responded Miss Abitha, with a little laugh. "Now I must go and tell your mother and grandmother to get you up early to-morrow morning," and with a gay little nod Miss Abitha ran up the steps and into the house.

"I will look up Jimmie," said grandfather, "and tell him that he is to have a holiday to-morrow," and Mr. Newman started toward the lower field where Jimmie was helping Mr. Bean dig potatoes, and the two little girls were left alone.

"What do you suppose a 'surprise picnic' is, Sister?" questioned Lamb.

Sister shook her head. "I can't guess," she responded, "but, Lamb, Miss Abitha never planned a good time yet but what it was a little better than any other good time we ever had."

"Then to-morrow will be the very best time," said Lamb.

"She says girls at school have good times," remarked Sister thoughtfully, "but I don't see what they can do, all shut up in a house."

"Miss Abitha always has good times," said Lamb. "I guess it's just because she's Miss Abitha, and can't help it wherever she is."

It was hardly daylight the next morning when Sister and Lamb were awakened by some pebbles striking against their chamber window. Sister jumped out of bed and ran and looked out. Jimmie Woodyear stood outside looking anxiously up.

"You'd better hurry up," he called; "Lion is all harnessed and your breakfast is most ready."

"Jump right up, Lamb," commanded Sister, and just at that moment grandmother appeared at the door.

Grandmother Newman was the nicest person in the world to brush out a girl's hair in the morning. She never pulled at the puzzling little snarls, but brushed so smoothly and evenly that before you knew it your

hair was as smooth as silk, your hair-ribbon tied in the nicest of bows, and you could look in the glass with surprise at the happy reflection. So she always received the warmest reception possible.

"Grandmother, what will we do at school without you?" said Lamb.

"And you want us to go," declared Sister accusingly. Just then Miss Abitha's voice was heard, and grandmother had only time to give each of the girls a kiss and hurry them down to breakfast.

Jimmie sat on the front seat of the carryall beside Miss Abitha, and Constance and Lamb on the back seat.

Grandfather and grandmother and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Newman were all standing near to see them start, and Mr. Eben Bean was telling Jimmie to be sure and put a blanket over "Lion," and see that he had plenty of good water to drink.

Jimmie was the happiest one of the happy party. He did not have many holidays, and to go off with Miss Abitha and the two little girls seemed the nicest kind of an outing. He was nearly fourteen years old, and was a large, strong boy of his age. He had begun to wonder what he would do when he became a man, and had about decided that a farmer's life was the happiest and most independent. His own father

did not own any land, and Jimmie often thought to himself that he would earn all the money he could, and when he grew older he would buy land and have a home like Pine Tree farm. But this morning his thoughts were only for the day before him. He did not even know in what direction Miss Abitha wanted him to drive, and when they reached the gate he looked at her inquiringly.

"Turn to the right, Jimmie," she said, "and drive down the Beech Hill road until you get to the schoolhouse road."

The schoolhouse road received its name from a little brown building which had formerly been used for a schoolhouse, but had been deserted for many years and was now very much out of repair. It was only a short distance from the Beech Hill road, but stood in a lonely spot where there was but little passing.

"Where does the schoolhouse road go to, Miss Abitha?" asked Lamb. Sister leaned out from the carryall and looked at the old schoolhouse with observing eyes. She noticed that the door sagged on its hinges, that there was no glass in the window-frames, and that the chimney had many missing bricks, but she smiled in so satisfied a manner that Lamb looked at her wonderingly.

"The schoolhouse road is just a little crossroad between Beech Hill road and the stage road," replied Miss Abitha, and she had hardly finished speaking when they came out on the stage road. "Now turn to the left, Jimmie," she said, and as old Lion swung into the broad straight road both Sister and Lamb exclaimed in admiration.

The road was hard and smooth and was shaded on each side by tall elms and wide-branched oaks. Wild clematis and geraniums were at their loveliest, and grew near the roadside in masses of color.

"I can see a lovely blue lake straight ahead, at the end of this road," announced Lamb, leaning forward and putting her head between Miss Abitha and Jimmie.

Jimmie looked down at her with a little laugh.

"That isn't a lake," he said, "that's Blue Mountain."

"Oh," exclaimed Sister, "do we drive right to it?"

"This road curves 'round it," responded Jimmie.

The curve in the road came very suddenly, and then the mountain seemed to have changed color; for, as they came nearer they could see the beautiful thick growth of spruce trees, with now and then a glowing yellow branch of a birch or maple.

"Drive right in there, Jimmie," directed Miss Abitha, and they turned into a wood-road, apparently but little used. The limbs of the trees scraped across the top of the carriage, and the woods grew so thickly on each side that they seemed almost like green walls.

"We are going straight up Blue Mountain," said Sister in a whisper.

Then Miss Abitha turned around and nodded smilingly. "That's just what we are doing," she responded; "but we won't make poor Lion do it all; just as soon as we get to the big chestnut we will have to get out, for the road ends there."

In a short time they came out into a clearing. Nearly in the centre stood a big chestnut tree and Jimmie drove directly under it and called out, "Whoa," as he sprang to the ground and politely helped Miss Abitha from the carriage. Sister and Lamb were out in a minute and looking eagerly about, while Miss Abitha and Jimmie took out the baskets. Then Jimmie unharnessed Lion and put a blanket over him. He had brought a bucket and said he knew where there was a fine spring of water, and started off to get a bucketful for the horse.

"This tree is covered with nuts," said Miss Abitha. "After the frost comes Jimmie and I will have to

make another trip over here and get chestnuts to send to you girls."

"Perhaps we will be here to go with you," suggested Sister.

"I'm afraid not," said Miss Abitha; "it isn't much use to try for chestnuts before October, and your mother plans to start for Newville with you about the twentieth of September!"

"And to-day is the fifth," declared Sister, with such a despondent note in her voice that Miss Abitha laughed.

"Don't talk about going away," said Lamb; "just see how lovely everything is here," and she looked up admiringly toward the upward slope of the mountain. "Are we going way up?" she asked.

"As far as the Look Out," answered Miss Abitha, and as Jimmie had now attended to all Lion's wants the little party started up the narrow path.

Miss Abitha led the way. It was a steep scramble in some places, but they kept on and when they came out on the smooth moss covered ledge known as the Look Out they all felt it well worth the hard climb.

It seemed like a shelf on the mountainside. It was about forty feet wide, and then the space shelved rudely down over a jumble of rocks and half-grown

spruce trees. Back of it rose a cliff, partly covered with the forest growth.

As they came out on the Look Out and set down their baskets they turned admiring looks over the beautiful view stretched beneath them. The curve of the white road, the smooth fields and orchards, the distant river and mountains, made up a beautiful picture that Sister and Lamb never forgot.

Miss Abitha and Jimmie were more familiar with the scene, but they enjoyed the evident pleasure of their companions.

"What lovely soft moss," exclaimed Lamb, establishing herself comfortably near a big rock.

"This is the very best time of all," declared Constance, "but I'm as hungry as can be, and awfully warm and thirsty."

"Bring me that covered pail, Jimmie," said Miss Abitha, and when she opened it there were two tall bottles with ice all about them.

"Lemonade!" exclaimed Jimmie, "I smell it."

The cool drink made them all more comfortable, and as Miss Abitha handed them some delicious sandwiches, and took out a number of tempting looking cakes they began to feel that they would not long be hungry.

"Aren't we going to have any sort of a fire?" questioned Sister, "we always have had fires at our other picnics and roasted things."

Miss Abitha shook her head. "No," she responded, "no fires allowed on Blue Mountain. For some careless person might forget to put one out, and then all these beautiful woods would be burned away."

Miss Abitha told them that far to the south the ocean lay. "Sometimes we can see it from here," she said, and after patiently looking toward the south for some minutes both Lamb and Jimmie could distinguish the gray, hazy line which Miss Abitha told them was the sea. Constance had found a bed of checkerberries. The fruit was just ripe and she gathered a handful of the spicy red berries and brought them to Miss Abitha.

"What's that?" exclaimed Jimmie, as a rustle sounded in the underbrush just below them. They all kept very quiet and listened. In a moment the noise came again, and then the yellow nose of a fox poked itself up.

"Oh!" whispered Lamb, "it's my own fox way off here, and grown up."

"I do believe it is," said Miss Abitha, for the wild-wood creature stepped out from its cover and drew

near. While cautious about coming within reach, it was evidently not afraid, and picked up the pieces of bread and chicken that the children threw it. But when Lamb made a rush toward him Sir Fox vanished, and was seen no more.

Jimmie scrambled down among the rocks to see if he could not find the fox's den. Miss Abitha declared that she was sleepy, and rested her head against a conveniently sloping rock, while Lamb and Sister went back to secure more checkerberries.

"This would be a nice place to run to, Sister," suggested Lamb.

Sister shook her head. "No," she responded, "it's too far, and it would be horrid if it rained. I've got a place all picked out, and I'll tell you, Lamb, if you'll promise honest not to tell."

But before Lamb could promise there came a loud call from the rocks below.

"Help," came the voice, and both the little girls exclaimed, "It's Jimmie!" and ran and looked over the rough pile of stones where the boy had scrambled down. Miss Abitha heard the call, and was making her way down the slope as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER III

JIMMIE IS IN DANGER

JIMMIE was familiar with the Look Out slope and knew that, just below the loose heap of rocks, there was a steep ledge with a drop of twenty feet or more ; but, in his eagerness to follow the fox and discover its hiding place, he forgot that every step on Look Out slope should be taken with great care, as the rolling stones might send a careless traveler down over the cliff.

But he had no thought of fear as he scrambled swiftly down among the scrubby spruce and uncertain rocks. He had a glimpse of a pointed yellow head, and giving a spring toward it lost his footing and in a second was sliding and stumbling down the declivity, unable to help himself. Over the verge of the ledge went Jimmie as if thrown by strong hands and as he went the back of his jacket caught on a protruding stump and he found himself swinging off into space, held only by the uncertain strength of his coat. It was then that his loud call for help aroused Miss Abitha and startled Sister and Lamb.

Miss Abitha at once discovered the boy's predicament, and as she made her way toward him she called back to the two little girls: "Stay right where you are, children; don't come a step this way unless I call for you."

It took Miss Abitha but a short time to reach the place where Jimmie hung helpless and motionless; for he had at once realized that any movement on his part might set his coat free and send him down on to the pile of rocks below.

"If Jimmie wasn't such a big boy I could get hold of his shoulders and pull him up," thought Miss Abitha, but she was sure that Jimmie's weight was too much for her to attempt such a thing, and that it could only result in dragging her over the cliff. She stood near the stump and made her decision quickly. Unfastening her strong blue serge skirt she tore it into strips, tied the strips securely together and fastened one end around the stump.

"My jacket is tearing," called Jimmie, warningly. He had heard Miss Abitha and knew that she was trying to help him, but he dared not even turn his head to discover in what way.

"Jimmie," said Miss Abitha, "I am going to drop a rope, made of my skirt, as nearly over your shoulder

as I can and you must grab it and fasten it about your body. Then you can turn yourself about and make an effort to climb up. I am sure the rope will hold and I can help you."

"But I'm afraid to move for fear the jacket won't hold," said Jimmie.

"I will hold on to the jacket. You must do as I say, Jimmie, for the jacket can't hold long at the best, and then you may get a bad fall."

Fastening a stick to the end to steady it Miss Abitha dropped her rope carefully down over the boy's shoulder. She saw his right arm move cautiously toward it. In a few seconds he had managed to fasten it securely about his body. Then Miss Abitha knew that the danger had not really lessened, and that the time had come for quick work. It was possible that the strands might give way.

"Now turn round, Jimmie," she commanded, "and grab for the edge of the cliff." The boy obeyed, and at his first decided movement the jacket gave way and he swung held only by the rope. He had made an upward clutch as he swung, and succeeded in getting a grasp on an overhanging root; and with Miss Abitha's assistance he crawled back into safety.

"Do you suppose my mother can mend that coat?"

he asked anxiously, as he and his rescuer made their way up the slope.

"Perhaps she can, but she can't mend my skirt," responded Miss Abitha, with a little laugh.

"Oh, Miss Abitha!" exclaimed Jimmie, conscious-stricken at the thought that he had for a moment forgotten his obligations to her. "Your nice skirt is all torn up, to help me!" He wanted to thank her, but he hardly knew how.

"My dear boy, you are worth more serge skirts than I shall ever have," she declared; "and I would have given anything I had rather than to have had you fall down on those dreadful rocks."

Jimmie's face flushed as he turned a grateful look toward his friend. He resolved then and there that he would buy Miss Abitha a new skirt, and decided to consult young Mrs. Newman about it as soon as possible.

Sister and Lamb could hardly wait for Jimmie to clamber up to where they stood before they were calling out to know what had happened; and they listened eagerly to Jimmie's brief description of his accident and rescue.

"I suppose that is what you would call an adventure, isn't it?" questioned Sister.

Miss Abitha nodded. "Yes," she answered, "but

it might have been a mis-adventure if I had not remembered something that I learned at school."

"At school?" repeated Sister questioningly.

"Yes," replied Miss Abitha. "You children sit down on this nice moss and rest and give Jimmie what there is left in the lunch-basket; adventures make people hungry, don't they, Jimmie?" The boy smiled his agreement to this suggestion, and Miss Abitha again turned to Sister. "Yes," she repeated, "when I went to Miss Wilson's school we were taught all sorts of interesting and helpful things. She taught us to think and to act, too. Once every week she gave us an 'emergency talk.' An emergency talk was to give us some idea of what to do in case of accidents. Once she told us what to do when a person had been nearly drowned; and once she told us of things that might be done to escape from a burning building, and that was what I remembered when I saw Jimmie hanging over the cliff."

"What did she tell you?" asked Sister.

"She told us that sometimes it was possible to lower a person from a high window by tearing up sheets and blankets, and even wearing apparel, and tying them into long, strong ropes. So, not having a sheet or blanket I thought of 'wearing apparel.'"

"What else did she tell you about?" asked Jimmie, eagerly, between bites of a sandwich.

"Why," responded Miss Abitha thoughtfully, "as I look back now it seems to me as if she told me everything I know. We used to have the nicest times in our botany excursions. One afternoon every week the botany class went off after specimens. One afternoon the geology class went, and such queer things as we found out."

"I shouldn't call that going to school," announced Lamb. "Why, going after flowers and rocks is almost the same as going on picnics."

"It was all lovely," declared Miss Abitha; "and right near Miss Wilson's school there is a big lake, and one of the teachers used to give us swimming lessons; and there were boats to go rowing in after study hours. You girls don't know what good times really are until you have twenty other girls to enjoy them with you."

Lamb looked hopefully toward Sister. The younger girl was beginning to think that going away to school was not such a dreadful thing after all. Lamb was thinking how nice it would be to learn to swim, and perhaps to learn to row a boat. But Sister's expression was not encourag-

ing. She was regarding Miss Abitha with almost disapproval.

"I would rather stay at Pine Tree farm than to learn everything in the world," she declared.

Miss Abitha laughed. "You won't feel that way next year, my dear," she replied, "and now we must journey down and see how old Lion has enjoyed the day and start for home. It has been more of a surprise picnic than you expected, hasn't it, Jimmie?"

"I've had a real good time," responded Jimmie, "seeing the fox, and everything. I guess I shall remember about being careful after this."

It was late in the afternoon before Lion was harnessed and ready to start down toward the stage road. As they went swiftly over the smooth road toward home Lamb whispered to Constance, "Sister, wouldn't you like to go to school just a little while?"

"No, I wouldn't," replied Constance crossly, and just then Miss Abitha turned a smiling face toward them. "I forgot to tell you," she said, "about the nice skating parties we used to have at school. There would be two big bonfires built, one on each side of the lake: the sun goes out of sight so early on winter days, you know. But some of the teachers always went out with us, and we played games; skated, four

of us holding hands, did quadrilles, and all sorts of things. You girls will see what it's like this very winter."

"Oh, Sister!" exclaimed Lamb almost pleadingly.

"I suppose we could have just as good a time skating on the mill-pond at home," said Sister.

"I don't believe you could," responded Miss Abitha. "In the first place you wouldn't have all those nice girls to enjoy it and play games with you; and then the mill-pond is so far from your house that you couldn't go very often."

When they came in sight of the deserted schoolhouse Sister again looked at it with much interest, and did not notice that Lamb was very quiet, and sighed frequently, all the way home.

Shep came running out to meet them, his plume-like tail curled over more than ever, and Mr. Bean was on hand to help Jimmie unharness old Lion. The family listened to the little girl's account of the day's pleasure, and of Jimmie's accident.

"There, Constance," exclaimed grandmother, "what would have become of Jimmie if Miss Abitha had not had the advantages of Miss Wilson's instruction?"

"All people talk about is 'school, school,'" responded Sister. "I'm sure Miss Abitha would be just

as nice if she had never gone away to school, wouldn't she, grandfather?" and Sister looked hopefully toward her grandfather, sure that he would uphold her in her opinion about schools.

But, greatly to her surprise, Grandfather Newman seemed to hesitate. He looked toward grandmother and then toward his daughter-in-law and said, "Perhaps I'd better tell them about it?"

"Yes, father," said young Mrs. Newman smilingly, "I'm sure Abitha would want you to."

Grandfather Newman nodded. "You see," he began, "when Abitha was about Sister's age she was rather a spoiled child. Her mother died when Abitha was a little girl, and Eben never could bear to refuse her anything that she set her heart on, and I'm afraid we all indulged her more than was right, and she was growing up anyway she saw fit. She didn't want to learn to do any work about the house or to do anything useful for herself or for anybody else."

The little girls were listening with evident surprise. It did not seem possible to them that any one as kind and helpful as Miss Abitha, and who knew so much about all sorts of useful and helpful things, could ever have been the sort of a girl that Grandfather Newman described.

"Well, when her fourteenth birthday was almost here," went on Mr. Newman, "your grandmother took hold of the affair. She had a talk with Eben, and she wrote to the school, and she had a talk with Abitha, and it was decided that Abitha was to go away to school. But Abitha didn't like the idea much better than Sister does. She declared she wouldn't go; but none of us paid much attention to that. Eben was going with her, and when the time came for them to start there wasn't any girl to go. Abitha had run away!"

"O-oh!" exclaimed both the little girls; "where did she run?"

"She didn't run very far," replied grandfather. "There was an old smoke-house back of the barns at that time, and when we went to look for her we found her there. She had fixed up a bed for herself, carried out food, and prepared to stay several days," grandfather laughed at the remembrance, and then continued, "Eben had to be pretty firm that day. She was very tall for her age, but he picked her up and carried her out to the wagon and lifted her in and off they went. We didn't see Abitha again for six months, but when we did see her we saw a much more lovable girl. She liked Pine Tree farm just as

well as ever, but she had been away among well-behaved girls and had proper instruction, and that was the beginning of the Abitha we all love so well. Miss Wilson's school taught her to be thoughtful for others and for herself, and to be of some use in the world."

Grandmother Newman nodded approvingly. "You see, my dears, that school means a great deal," she said.

But Sister did not look convinced. "I guess Miss Abitha would have been nice anyway," she declared.

Just as Lamb was going to sleep that night Sister gave her a warning poke. "Lamb," she whispered, "I didn't tell you where we were going to run away to."

"No," responded Lamb, sleepily.

"Well," said Sister, "I should think you could guess. We're going to stay in the old brown schoolhouse till they get over their idea of sending us away to school."

"Miss Abitha had to go," said Lamb ; "and everybody says school is lovely. Don't you think we had better go for a little while, Sister ?"

"No, I don't!" replied Sister, positively, and Lamb was too sleepy to argue the question.

CHAPTER IV

GETTING READY TO RUN AWAY

"MRS. NEWMAN," said Jimmie Woodyear the morning after the ride to the Look Out, "does a serge skirt cost very much? I mean a skirt for a grown-up woman."

"Why, no, Jimmie," replied Mrs. Newman, "you can buy enough serge for a good skirt for three dollars."

Jimmie's face brightened. He had a few dollars saved, and had determined to buy Miss Abitha material for a new skirt, to take the place of the one she had torn up for him, but had been almost afraid that he would not have money enough. Now he was sure that he could make the desired purchase, and resolved to do so that very day, for Mr. Newman had told him that he should want him to go to the village on an errand. But when he was all ready to start he was somewhat dismayed to see Miss Abitha waiting for him at her gate. She wore a hat and was evidently intending to go with him. Jimmie felt that it would be easier to buy the serge if Miss Abitha was not

standing near ; but he helped her into the wagon and they drove off toward the village.

"I am going to the village to buy some serge," announced Miss Abitha, as they rode along. Jimmie drew in his breath quickly but did not speak, and his companion continued, "I am going to make Sister and Lamb a little present. Their mother and grandmother have made them all sorts of pretty clothes to wear when they go away, but they have not thought about gymnasium suits ; and just as soon as the girls get started in at school they will need gymnasium suits, so I am going to make them, do them all up and put a card on each package saying, 'Do not open this package until you have been at school four days,'" and Miss Abitha laughed as if she had thought of the best possible plan.

Jimmie laughed too, he was glad that Miss Abitha was not going to buy serge for herself. "I guess I don't know what you mean by 'gymnasium,'" he said.

"I don't suppose you do," rejoined Miss Abitha ; "I must tell you about it. You see, at almost every school now there is a room for the pupils to play games in and they call that room the gymnasium. They have a running track, and all sorts of exercises, such as marching, performing on parallel bars and

trapeze, climbing ropes and poles, dumb-bells, Indian clubs, and all sorts of things to develop muscular power. And of course girls require loose, comfortable clothing for that sort of games."

"Do they have all those things at school?" asked Jimmie, and, without waiting for an answer. "And those girls don't want to go! My! I wish I could go."

Miss Abitha laughed. "You are developing a good deal of muscular power in your work every day, Jimmie," she responded; "sawing wood and hoeing potatoes is just as good for you as swinging Indian clubs."

"I'd like to have a trapeze, though," said the boy.

"Well, why don't you have one?" rejoined Miss Abitha. "You can make one easily enough. A good bar of hard wood with a strong rope fastened at each end, and then fasten your ropes to a beam in the shed, and there you are! You fix one and I will tell you lots of tricks to do on it."

"Oh, will you, Miss Abitha? That will be great," exclaimed Jimmie. "I used to think that I'd go to sea when I was old enough," continued the boy; "but since I began to work for Mr. Newman I have made up my mind to be a farmer."

"That's right," said Miss Abitha cordially.

"And I am going to save money and buy some land," continued the boy more seriously; "but I guess I shall be pretty old before I own much of a farm."

"I have some land of my own," announced Miss Abitha, "and I would like to sell it. Perhaps we can strike a bargain. I own thirty acres on the Franklin road. It is all growing up with alders and white birch. It ought to be cleared and burned over and ploughed; but I can't afford to have it done."

"That's good land up that way," remarked Jimmie.

"Jimmie!" exclaimed Miss Abitha, sitting up straighter than ever, "I have thought of a fine plan! Why can't you clear my land for me and take your pay in land?"

Jimmie laughed at her eager look. "I don't have any time," he answered. "You see Mr. Newman pays me regular wages. I only have Saturday afternoons."

"But you could do a lot Saturday afternoons," urged Miss Abitha; "you could begin cutting down the white birch, and I believe you could sell most of it for fire-wood, or perhaps to the spool mill over at the Junction. Jimmie! If you want to undertake it I will give you all you can get for the wood. And when you have cleared six acres I will give you an acre."

The boy's face had grown very bright. He knew he could find a market for the birch wood. He looked at Miss Abitha earnestly. "Can I begin next Saturday?" he asked.

"Of course you can," said Miss Abitha; "and by the time you are twenty-one you will own a farm of your own."

The errands at the village were soon attended to, and the time had come for Jimmie to purchase the material for Miss Abitha's skirt. She was standing near him, but he did not hesitate.

"I want five yards of dark blue serge," he demanded of the storekeeper, and, that there might be no mistake, he added: "It's for a lady, to make a skirt of."

The storekeeper nodded, measured off the goods, handed Jimmie the package, and the great deed was accomplished.

Miss Abitha and Jimmie had so much to talk about that the ride home seemed very short. When they reached Miss Abitha's gate Jimmie carried her bundles in to the house for her.

"But here is an extra parcel," exclaimed Miss Abitha, taking up the package which held the serge material. "What is this?"

"That is cloth to make you a new skirt," declared Jimmie. Miss Abitha looked at the boy for a moment, and then she said, with a little quaver in her voice, "Thank you, Jimmie," and went into the house, and somehow Jimmie felt very much pleased with himself, and drove old Lion into the farm yard at a brisk pace.

He was very anxious to get home that night and tell his mother of Miss Abitha's plan. The Woodyear family lived in a small house half a mile from Pine Tree farm, and Jimmie went home every night. He knew that his mother would think that he was a fortunate boy to have so good an opportunity to earn an acre of land.

When he was unharnessing Lion, Lamb and Sister came out to the stable.

"Do you know what good times you girls are going to have?" questioned Jimmie.

"Oh, what?" asked Sister eagerly, thinking that Miss Abitha had told Jimmie of some new plan.

"Why, at school," responded the boy, "Miss Abitha says that they have a big room there on purpose to play games in. Indian clubs to swing, and all sorts of things. I'm going to fix a trapeze in the shed

and she is going to show me how to do some of the tricks."

"When are you going to fix it?" asked Sister.

"As soon as the fall work is over," answered Jimmie, "if I have time," he concluded thoughtfully; "but I may not have a chance before you girls come home for vacation; and then you could tell me about it."

"We may not go to school after all," said Sister; endeavoring to speak as if it was a question hardly worth discussing.

Jimmie looked at her in surprise. "Well," he said slowly, "some people don't know when they are lucky. I wish I could go to school."

Just then Mrs. Newman called to the girls from the porch door. "Come, children, I want to try on your new dresses," she said, and they both scampered toward the house.

That afternoon Sister told Lamb that they must begin to make their arrangements at the schoolhouse.

"We will need quilts," said Sister; "and it is too far away for us to carry very much. So we will have to take things down in the pony cart."

"How can we?" objected Lamb. "I guess if we go to loading quilts and things into the pony cart

our mother would know it and ask us about it right off."

"Oh, dear," answered Sister. "Lamb! Of course we have got to hide things. We must take the quilts out to-night, after everybody else is asleep, and hide them behind the stone wall down the road a piece, then to-morrow we will start off to ride and get the quilts and carry them down to the schoolhouse."

"What else will we have to take?" asked Lamb.

"Well," said Sister thoughtfully, "it will be a good plan to take some potatoes to bake, and some apples. And next time we will take bread and cake."

Lamb was very quiet that afternoon. The idea of creeping out of the house after all the older people were asleep seemed a pretty serious undertaking. Besides that she had begun to think that going away to school was not, after all, such a great misfortune. If Miss Abitha had enjoyed it so much Lamb was quite sure there must be some pleasure in it, and only Constance's determination not to leave Pine Tree farm held her younger sister to the plan of running away.

"We won't undress," said Constance, when the two little girls had gone up-stairs that evening; "we'll just slip off our shoes and get right in bed; then, after

everybody else is sound asleep we will creep down-stairs just as easy, let ourselves out the front door, and carry the quilts down the road."

"Perhaps I'll go to sleep before it's time to start," suggested Lamb.

"Well, I s'pose you will," responded Constance; "you always do go to sleep before I have time to talk any; but I shall wake you up. I shan't even be sleepy."

"Are we going in our stockings?" asked Lamb.

Constance nodded. "Until we get out of doors," she answered; "we will take our shoes in our hands and put them on as soon as we are outside the house."

Lamb asked no more questions; she lay staring into the darkness, resolved that she would keep awake as long as Constance did; but in spite of her good intentions her eyes soon closed, and when Sister gave her a warning shake Lamb was sure that she had only been asleep a moment.

"You have been asleep hours and hours," whispered Sister. "Grandfather went around fastening the doors a long time ago. I guess it's about midnight now."

"Midnight," sounded rather appalling, and Lamb began to whimper, "I don't want to go out in the dark, Sister. Can't we get along without quilts?"

Constance had slipped quietly out of bed and lit the small lamp, and was now bringing out two packages from the closet.

"You get up this very minute, Lamb Eunice Newman," she commanded. "Anybody would think that you wanted to go to that old school."

For a moment Lamb thought that she would declare that she did want to go to school; but she was used to obeying Constance and she now stumbled sleepily out of bed, picked up her shoes, and stood waiting.

"I shall put this light out in a minute," said Constance. "You take this quilt, and come close behind me," and she lay one of Grandmother Newman's nicely pieced patchwork quilts in Lamb's outstretched arms. Then out went the light and the two little girls stepped carefully toward the chamber door. Lamb stubbed her toes against a forgotten chair, but she did not cry out. She knew that it was not a time to cry over small hurts. Out through the dark hallway and down the stairs they went. Constance unfastened the front door so softly that not until the big door swung open did Lamb realize that they were really out of doors.

"Now we'll put on our shoes," said Constance, and they sat down on the broad doorstep and slipped their

feet into the stout little shoes. Then they picked up their quilts and went softly down the path to the road.

"It doesn't seem so dark now that we are really out," declared Lamb, looking up at the shining stars, and breathing in the fragrant air; "doesn't everything smell good, Sister," she went on, "and don't those trees make pretty shadows across the road. Why, I'm not a bit afraid," and Lamb gave a little hop of satisfaction at her own unexpected courage.

Sister walked on silently for a little way, and then she said, "I'm real glad that you are not afraid, Lamb, because when we run away we will have to creep out at night just like this; and walk all the way to the schoolhouse."

"I think it's fun," responded the younger sister. "Why, if I didn't have this quilt to carry I could run and run."

They soon reached the place where Constance had decided to hide the quilts. She tucked them under some small shrubs that grew close to the wall, piled up some good sized stones in front of them, and declared that they would be safe enough until the next day, when they would come after them with the pony cart and take them to the schoolhouse.

They were back at the front door in a very short

time, and Constance pushed against it. It did not open at the first push, so she pressed against it with all her small strength, still it did not yield ; and then Constance remembered that she had heard grandmother say that there was a spring-lock on the front door. That is, unless the spring was turned from the inside, the door locked itself when shut.

"Oh, Lamb !" she exclaimed, "the spring-lock has shut us out ! What shall we do ? We can't get in."

"We can knock and knock and wake everybody up, and they will come and let us in," suggested Lamb.

"We can't," wailed Constance ; "they would send us to school to-morrow for going out after everybody was in bed. Even grandpa would blame us."

"Oh, dear," said Lamb, "I just wish you hadn't thought about quilts, Sister ; then we'd be safe indoors."

"We've got to get in," declared Sister ; "perhaps the shed window is open."

They went toward the shed and looked anxiously at the narrow window. It was open, but it was too far from the ground for Sister to even reach it.

"We can't get in there," she said hopelessly. "I guess we will have to wait until morning and then manage to get in without any one seeing us."

"Sister," exclaimed Lamb, "you know that big tree close to our windows?"

"Yes," responded Sister.

"Well, can't you climb up that tree and get in at our window and then come and open the front door for me?"

"No, I can't," answered Sister. "I couldn't climb that high anyway, and if I did I couldn't reach our window. No, we've got to stay out of doors all night, and we will probably get dreadful colds, and all on account of their wanting us to go away to school."

"Do you suppose the side door is fastened?" suggested Lamb, to whom the idea of staying out of doors all night seemed too dreadful to consider.

Without a word Sister started for the side door. She lifted the latch softly and the door swung inward. The two little girls stepped into the dark kitchen.

"We've got on our shoes," whispered Lamb, as they tiptoed across the room, then through the dining-room right past grandfather's chamber door and out into the front hall.

"My!" exclaimed Constance as they reached the safety of their own room, "I guess I won't take anything else out at night."

CHAPTER V

THE TRIP TO THE SCHOOLHOUSE

THE next day Jet was harnessed to the pony cart and the two little girls drove briskly down the road. Grandfather Newman stood at the gate and watched them until a turn in the road hid them from view.

"I expect they will miss Jet," he thought, "it seems almost too bad for them to go away to school when there is so much for them to enjoy at home."

If he could have seen the pony-wagon just then he would have realized that Sister and Lamb were making ready for some other journey than the one to Miss Wilson's school. Sister had managed to conceal nearly a peck of potatoes under the seat, and a dozen or two apples, and when they had rescued the quilts from their hiding place and stowed them in the bottom of the wagon the little cart was pretty well filled.

"We mustn't drive right up to the schoolhouse door," announced Sister, "because some one might see the tracks." So Jet was driven under a shady maple tree just beyond the schoolhouse, and Sister and Lamb

made several journeys to the dilapidated old building, carrying as many potatoes as they could by holding up their dress skirts basket-fashion.

"There isn't a chair or anything," exclaimed Lamb as they looked about the empty little room. "We will have to sleep right on the bare floor, Sister."

Sister shook her head. "No, we won't," she responded; "look at all the maple leaves there are heaped up all along back of this house. We can bring in a lot of them and pile them up in the corner, and spread a quilt over them and then we'll have a nice bed and have the other quilt to put over us. But I did hope there would be a stove," she concluded regretfully.

"We can't cook our potatoes after all," declared Lamb.

"We'll build a little fire outside somewhere and roast them. But now we must bring in just as many leaves as we can," and both the little girls were soon busily at work bringing in leaves and heaping them up in one corner of the room.

They had not fastened the pony, and indeed forgot all about him in their efforts to make as good a bed as possible; and when Sister declared that it was just as easy as could be, a statement which she proved by

stretching herself upon it out at full length, then they began to think of home.

"Jet's gone!" exclaimed Lamb. "Look, Sister, he's started for home!" And, sure enough, there were the marks where the pony had turned about and trotted off toward home.

"Oh, dear!" said Sister, "we must hurry after him just as fast as we can," and they both started on a run toward the main road.

"Perhaps he will stop to feed on the way, he's so lazy," panted Lamb, but not a glimpse did they get of him. Constance ran much more swiftly than her sister, and in spite of Lamb's calls to "wait! wait!" was soon a long distance ahead.

"If she catches Jet she will just have to come back and get me," resolved Lamb, sitting down on a convenient rock near the road. "I'm awfully tired," she continued, "and I'm sleepy, too, and it's all Sister's fault making me get up last night, and everything." Lamb began to feel very sorry for herself. "I know what I'll do," she resolved; "I'll go up this little wood-road and hide and let Sister look for me," and Lamb ran a little way up the path, and then sat down again leaning against a big tree, for the little girl was really very tired.

Sister ran on and on and still did not overtake the pony. "He must have got home," she concluded, as she came in sight of Pine Tree farm, "and then father will say that I ought to have fastened him."

As she reached the gate she turned to look for Lamb, and called her name. "I guess she will be along in a minute," she decided, and walked on toward the shed where Mr. Eben Bean was at work.

"What have you done with your team?" questioned Mr. Bean.

"Hasn't Jet come home?" asked Constance.

Mr. Bean shook his head.

"Well," explained the little girl, "Lamb and I got out to get some leaves, and left the pony standing under a tree, and first thing we knew he was gone."

"What made you think he came toward home?" questioned Mr. Bean.

"We could see where he turned the cart round."

Mr. Bean nodded. "That's pretty good evidence," he said, "but he may have turned off on to another road. Where's Lamb?"

"Oh, she's coming," replied Constance. "I run faster than she does."

"We'll start right after Jet," declared Mr. Bean. "He may have got into trouble somewhere." And,

with Sister trotting after him, Eben strode down the road. He looked carefully for the tracks of the pony cart as he walked along.

"Jet hasn't come this far," he declared when he came to the first turn in the road. "And where is Lamb?"

"She is coming," said Constance; but as they went on and on and finally came to the schoolhouse road and saw no trace either of Jet or Lamb, Constance began to feel alarmed.

"I believe Lamb is hiding," she said bravely. "I wouldn't wait when she called me, and perhaps she thought that she would hide."

Mr. Bean made no reply, and the two turned and began walking toward home. Constance began to feel very tired. Her feet ached, and she felt ready to cry, but she kept bravely on. Mr. Bean could not find any trace of Lamb or of the pony, and now he became anxious about the little girl. It was late in the afternoon when he and Constance reached home, and Constance went into the kitchen to tell her story to her mother, while Eben told her father. In a few minutes the father and grandfather and Eben were hurrying back down the road. Jimmie Woodyear had just started for home.

The men searched the roadsides carefully, but could see no footprints of child or pony, and all sorts of fears began to take possession of them. It grew dark, and Grandfather Newman returned to the farm to get lanterns and to reassure the family, although he was beginning to lose courage himself. He had just turned into the driveway when he heard the patter of hoofs behind him, and looking around saw Jet coming swiftly toward home. In the pony cart sat Lamb smiling as happily as if she had not been the cause of so much anxiety.

"Grandfather!" she called out, as she came up beside him, "what do you think! I sat down to rest and I went fast asleep, and first thing I knew I woke up and Jet's nose was right in my face; and it was all shadowy in the wood-road. And I got into the wagon and we came right home!" Lamb wondered why her mother hugged her so closely and why they were all so glad to see her. Grandfather decided that Jet had turned up the wood-road and on his way out had found Lamb and stopped beside her.

"I'm glad Jet waited until I woke up," said Lamb, "for it was so shadowy and lonesome I guess I would have been frightened."

Grandfather Newman got out the big horn and

blew three times, and in a short time Mr. Newman and Eben hurried into the yard, and were glad enough to find Lamb and Jet safe at home.

"I'll wait for you next time, Lamb," whispered Sister, when they sat down for supper. Both the girls were so tired that they were glad enough to go to bed early that night, and even Sister was too sleepy to talk over the day's adventures.

The time for starting for school was drawing very near. Their trunks had been brought down from the attic, the new dresses were all finished, and grandmother had a box of fruit cookies all ready to put in as a surprise for the girls when they should unpack the trunk. Sister and Lamb had not made a second visit to the schoolhouse, but they had several packages to take with them when the time should come for their great adventure. Miss Abitha told them every day of some new pleasure that was awaiting them at school, but Sister did not waver in her determination not to go.

"We'll have a lovely time at the schoolhouse," she assured Lamb, "and we will only stay just long enough so Miss Wilson won't take us for the fall term."

"How long will that be?" questioned Lamb.

"Just two days," declared Sister; "for mother says now that she won't start until the day before school begins. We will go down to the schoolhouse the night before, and we will stay two days."

"We'll have to go in the dark," objected Lamb.

"It will be fun!" insisted Sister; "and I'm going to take one of grandfather's lanterns and some matches, so that we can have a light if we want to."

The day before Mrs. Newman planned to start for the school Miss Abitha brought over the two packages containing the gymnasium suits. Each one was neatly done up and on the paper was written "Not to be opened until you have been at school a week." And both the little girls wondered what could be inside.

"It's sure to be something nice," said Constance; "but it will be just as nice to have it at home whatever it is."

"But Miss Abitha said it was just for school," objected Lamb, "and perhaps if we don't go to school we can't have it."

Everything was ready for the next day's journey when Constance and Lamb went up-stairs. Their trunks were locked and strapped. Their pretty suits of cashmere, with their new hats, lay waiting to be

put on the next morning ; and they had said good-bye to Jimmie Woodyear. "But we may see you very soon, Jimmie, sooner than you think," Lamb had said, and Constance had added, "I shouldn't be surprised if we didn't go to school now," and Jimmie had laughed, and said that he guessed it would be Christmas time before they would be home. "And by that time I shall own an acre of land," he declared ; "and perhaps we can have a picnic on my clearing."

CHAPTER VI

THE RUNAWAYS

IT seemed a long time to Constance and Lamb before the house grew quiet for the night.

"I know it's ten o'clock," complained Lamb, as the two girls drew packages and bundles from various hiding-places, "and we have so many things to carry."

"Sshh!" warned Constance, "don't take your night-dress, Lamb. I guess you can sleep in your clothes for a couple of nights."

At last they were ready for another midnight excursion. Constance carried a good-sized tin pail filled with a variety of useful articles. In it were six eggs, a package of matches, two tin cups, doughnuts and cookies. The latter were more or less dry and hard, having been brought from the kitchen closet some days before. She also carried a paper bundle containing a brush and comb, a hatchet, and a pair of scissors.

Lamb's burden consisted of two loaves of bread tied up in a newspaper, and an apple pie.

"We shall have to keep our shoes on this time," whispered Constance; "so step easy."

It was hard work to keep the apple pie properly balanced, and at the same time remember to set each foot down cautiously. As she went down the stairs Lamb recalled the fact that Grandmother Newman's apple pies were deliciously juicy, and this was freshly baked. The plate had felt warm to Lamb's hands when she carried it up the back stairs that very afternoon.

"I know that pie leaked all the way down-stairs," announced Lamb as they reached the yard in safety.

"Never mind," responded Sister, "we must walk just as fast as we can till we get out of sight of the house, then we needn't hurry. It's awful dark."

"Oh, Sister! Where's the lantern?" demanded Lamb.

"I forgot it!" acknowledged Sister so humbly that Lamb did not reproach her, and they kept on in silence. Lamb endeavored to carry the pie without tipping it too much to one side or the other, but the bundle of bread made it very difficult.

"My hands are all sticky," she declared, "and I'm just as sure as sure can be that my dress is all covered with pie juice."

"Never mind," comforted Sister; "it's your old plaid dress, so it's no matter."

They stopped to rest several times, but long before the old schoolhouse was reached both the little girls were thoroughly tired out. They stumbled over the dilapidated steps and stood in the dark little building. Constance managed to find her matches, and by their fitful flame the girls set down their burdens and then crept toward the bed of leaves in the corner and drew the blanket over them.

"Isn't this fun!" whispered Sister. Lamb was too sleepy to respond. But she did not think it was fun at all. However bad school might be Lamb was quite sure that it was better than these dreadful midnight excursions, and dark unfamiliar surroundings.

Sister was very tired, but she did not go to sleep. She could hear so many strange noises. And as she lay staring into the darkness she became perfectly sure that some animal shared the shelter of the old schoolhouse. She heard soft footfalls across the old floor, and once, reaching her hand toward the wall she knew that she touched warm fur, and starting up she saw two yellow eyes not far away.

Sister gasped in terror. Then she heard the overturn of her tin pail, and a satisfied little bark which

someway reminded her of Shep, and she sprang to her feet calling out "Shoo! Shoo!" so vigorously that the echo of her voice came back to her. Whatever her visitor was it escaped through one of the shutterless windows and no further noise disturbed her. But she could not sleep. It seemed a long time since she had kissed her mother and father good-night. She began to feel sorry for them. "I'm afraid they will be worried," she sighed, and just then a new sound came to her ears. It was the soft patter of rain. "Oh, dear," thought Sister, "if it rains what will we do?" Lamb slept soundly on. Wild animals might come and go, storms might gather, but Lamb was oblivious of the troubles that surrounded her. Toward morning Sister's eyes closed, and so soundly did both the children sleep that the morning was well advanced before they awoke.

Outside the rain was falling heavily. The branches of the trees made a lonely creaking sound in the wind, and the two girls crawled out from under their blanket with nothing very pleasant to look upon or to think about.

"It's awful cold," said Lamb; "and look, Sister, it's raining in at the windows and down through the roof."

"Look at your pie," exclaimed Sister; "you put it on the floor upside down. The plate is on top."

"Then I brought it upside down all the way," wailed Lamb, "for I set it down just as careful. Look at your tin pail, Sister, it's rolling over."

Sister picked up the pail and took off the cover, and at the sight of its contents she was ready to cry. The eggs were broken and had reduced the dry cookies to a mass of uneatable mixture of shells, eggs and crumbs. The tincups were rescued, and set out on the floor. The pie had been saved by its thick paper wrapping, but its juices had escaped, as the front of Lamb's dress testified.

"Well, we've got the bread," announced Sister; "and we left potatoes and apples here, so we shan't starve."

"Where is the bread?" asked Lamb. The newspaper in which it had been wrapped lay upon the floor, but there was no sign of the bread.

"O-oh," wailed Sister, "that animal ate it," and then she told the story of her wakeful night to Lamb, whose terror grew with every word.

"Let's go right home," exclaimed Lamb. "He may come right back and get us. Oh!" and her scream was echoed by Constance for just then a yellow head

with pointed ears appeared at the window, and, frightened by the girls' screams quickly disappeared.

"It was only a fox," said Sister; "and I do believe it was one of our own foxes that we tamed two years ago."

But Lamb was not to be comforted or reassured. "We haven't anything to eat but this pie," she said; "and I'm sure I never can stay another night in this dreadful place."

"You'll have to go away to school if you don't stay here until to-morrow," announced Sister with a brave effort to make the best of circumstances. "I guess we can stand it one day and another night rather than go to school where we can't have our pony or our kittens or anything, and only come home on vacations."

Lamb was peering about the room. "There's rats!" she exclaimed. "I saw two rats close by our bed. Sister, I'm going home now! I am! You needn't try to stop me. I'd go to school a thousand years before I'd stay another minute where there's foxes and rats walking all over you."

"But look at it rain," objected Sister; "it just pours."

"I don't care, I'll put a quilt over me," responded

Lamb, "and I guess my mother will say I did just right to come home." Lamb was now pulling the top quilt from the bed of leaves, and Constance watched her doubtfully. Before this she had always been the leader; the one to suggest and carry out all their plans, but there was such a determined energy in Lamb's words and actions that Constance realized that her little sister would do exactly as she said; that she would wrap the quilt about her and start out in the pouring rain for Pine Tree farm.

"Here, Sister," commanded Lamb, "you put this other quilt over you and we'll start right off."

Sister obeyed, and Grandmother Newman's best quilts were soon trailing along the muddy road as Lamb and Sister plodded on toward home.

The absence of Sister and Lamb was discovered early that morning. "They have run away, of course," said their mother; "perhaps they have run as far as the barn chamber, or they may not be farther than the attic." So both these places were carefully searched. Grandmother Newman discovered that her best quilts were missing as well as a pie and two loaves of bread, and then it was decided that the young adventurers had gone to the brush wigwam in the pasture; and Mr. Eben Bean immediately started in

that direction. When he returned with no trace of the runaways Grandfather Newman showed some anxiety, but young Mrs. Newman said they were safely hidden somewhere.

"It is all my fault," declared Miss Abitha; "you know I told them that I ran away, and I suppose the poor dears think that it's the proper thing to do."

"It convinces me that it's time they were at school," said their father. "I knew they didn't want to go, but I had no idea they would run away."

"Well," remarked grandfather thoughtfully, "now that you see just how the girls feel about going away I hope you'll realize that home is the place for them. Their grandmother can teach them considerable, so can their mother, and a better teacher than Abitha I don't wish to see," and Grandfather Newman looked at the little group about him for a moment and then concluded, "give up this school notion once and for all. I'll buy 'em a piano and they can take music lessons!"

"Jabez," there was a reproving tone in grandmother's voice, "you know that when we had charge of the children we were very careful not to overindulge them, or spoil them in any way; and now their mother and father feel just the same. They want them to have good school advantages."

"Well, well," responded grandfather, "no knowing where those poor children are now ; heart-broken, like as not, to think that we want to send them away," and grandfather started off on another trip to the barns.

It was early in the afternoon when Jimmie Wood-year saw two strange figures plodding along toward the farm. At the first look he decided that they were Indians, but a more careful glance convinced him that it was Sister and Lamb.

"Look, Mr. Bean, look!" he exclaimed.

"I swan!" ejaculated Eben, "don't that beat all!"

A few minutes later and the dripping quilts fell on the porch floor and two untidy little girls stepped into the kitchen.

"Oh! My dear grandmother!" exclaimed Lamb, "there were rats, and a fox walked round us, and the pie leaked, and I'm so hungry."

After a warm bath and dry clothes and a good luncheon the children related their adventures in full. They told of taking out the quilts at night, and of their plans to stay at the schoolhouse until too late to start for Miss Wilson's. As Grandfather Newman listened he remembered stories that he had heard of indulged children growing into useless men and women,

and the family were all surprised when he remarked with some firmness :

"It is an excellent plan for girls to go to school, to a good school. I suppose, daughter, that you will start for Miss Wilson's, with these girls to-morrow?"

"Yes," responded young Mrs. Newman, "we will go to-morrow on the early train."

"Have we got to go to school after all?" asked Sister in apparent surprise.

"Certainly," said her father.

Sister looked about for some trace of sympathy on the faces she loved best; they looked as if they expected her to be glad to leave them; even Lamb was so happily engaged with an apple tart as to be oblivious of all trouble. Just then Sister remembered Lamb's plan, and she said slowly, "Well, we don't want to go, and if you take us it will be useless, for you will just have to send and fetch us home."

"Oh, I guess you'll like it real well, dear," said grandmother, "and we shall all look forward to your coming home at Christmas time."

"We shall be home before that," responded Constance gloomily.

The next day the sun shone brightly, Sister and Lamb were dressed in their pretty new dresses and

hats, and started off with their mother for Miss Wilson's school.

"We'll try your plan now, Lamb," Sister whispered as they got into the car.

"What plan?" questioned Lamb.

"Why, about doing things that the teachers don't like so they will send us home from school."

"Oh, yes; well, I'm sure that's a much better plan than that old schoolhouse," responded Lamb.

"Wait and see," said Sister gloomily.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST WEEK AT SCHOOL

"WELL, Eunice, you are the youngest pupil in the school," said Miss Wilson, as she welcomed the little girls. Lamb looked at her mother anxiously. To be called "Eunice" made home seem a long way off. But Mrs. Newman did not appear to think it a matter of consequence. Indeed she had decided that it would be well if the girls should now be called by their proper names, Constance and Eunice, instead of "Sister" and "Lamb."

Miss Wilson's school was pleasantly situated on a hill. It was some distance from the highway. Miss Wilson's house where the girls lived was a square white house with wings, and broad piazzas. There were beautiful trees about the place, and as they drove through the grounds the girls noticed the lake of which Miss Abitha had told them. Beside the house there was the school building. This building contained the recitation rooms, library and gymnasium.

It was early in the afternoon when the Newmans

arrived, and Mrs. Newman was to remain until the next morning and then return to the farm. That afternoon she took Constance and Eunice on some of the walks she had enjoyed when a girl, and then helped them unpack their trunks.

"Here is a present from Miss Abitha," she said, "but she does not wish you to open the packages until you have been here a week."

The room which the girls were to occupy was in one of the wings. It had two windows from which you could see the lake and the main road. There were two single beds in the room, two small bureaus, several chairs, and a small desk. There was a dressing-room with hot and cold water, which seemed very remarkable to Lamb.

When they went into the dining-room for supper Lamb said "oh," very softly. For she had not thought much about the girls of the school, and here they all were, twenty of them.

There were two tables with ten girls and two teachers at each table. Miss Wilson told them they were to sit at her table, and then introduced them to the girls. The girl next to Lamb seemed very large, "almost grown-up," Lamb thought to herself. Her name was Rose Mason.

"You're pretty young to come to boarding-school, aren't you?" she asked.

"I'm 'most eleven," answered Lamb, "and I had to come because my sister did."

"Oh! How old is your sister?" questioned the tall girl, looking at Constance.

"She is thirteen," answered Lamb proudly.

"Well, then, she's old enough to belong to our club."

"What is a club?" asked Lamb wonderingly.

The tall girl smiled at her so kindly that Lamb was sure a club must be something very nice, and said :

"Why, a club is a number of people who like to do the same things; and they hold meetings, and have a president, and all that. Our club is the 'J. F. F.' Club, and I'm the president. We don't take in any member younger than thirteen."

"What is 'J. F. F.'?" asked Lamb.

Rose laughed again. "That's a secret," she replied, "that's one of our by-laws. Every member solemnly promises not to tell the meaning of 'J. F. F.'"

This seemed very remarkable to Lamb, and she was so much interested in what Rose told her that she forgot how many miles away she was from Pine Tree farm.

Constance, too, had been hearing about the club from the girl beside her. This girl was short. She was not much taller than Lamb, but she was very plump, and was nearly fifteen years old. Her hair was black and curly, and she had black eyes, and a dimple in each cheek. Constance thought that she looked exactly like her doll "Jabezza." This girl's name was Myrtle Green.

"I suppose you think my name is funny?" she said, with a little laugh, looking at Constance.

"It's a pretty name," Constance answered politely.

"Do you think so? Well, I don't. But it's better than my sister's; her name is Ivy. Just think, 'Ivy Green'! I wouldn't care so much," she continued, "if the girls didn't make up verses about me."

"What kind of verses?" asked Constance.

"Oh, like this:

"Green, green the myrtle grows,
See how plain the color shows.
Green, green, green as grass,
See the myrtle as you pass,
Green grows the myrtle.'

"I guess you wouldn't think it was funny if it was your name," she concluded, when Constance began to laugh.

"I guess I shouldn't care," replied Constance. "At home my grandfather called me 'Peter,' and I rather liked it."

"Then I shall call you 'Peter,' but I shan't let Miss Wilson hear me. She doesn't like nicknames."

"Doesn't she?" responded Constance, and resolved to tell Lamb that she had discovered one thing they could do toward making Miss Wilson send them home.

"I am secretary of the 'J. F. F.' Club," announced Myrtle. "Perhaps after you've been here awhile some of the girls may ask you to join."

Constance wondered what the "J. F. F." Club was, but she had resolved not to ask any questions.

"We may not be here very long," she responded, "so I guess I shall not join anything."

"You'll be here a year," announced Myrtle with so much confidence that Constance looked at her anxiously.

"How do you know?" she asked.

"Because, Miss Wilson won't take a girl for less than a year, and most girls stay two and three years," explained Myrtle. "We have real good times, too," she added.

There was a good deal for Sister and Lamb to talk about that night when they were alone in their room.

"Do you suppose everybody is going to call me 'Eunice'? It makes me feel just as if I was grandmother," complained Lamb.

"I shall call you Lamb," replied Constance, "and I want you to call me 'Peter' or 'Sister' whenever Miss Wilson can hear you. For I've found out that she doesn't like nicknames; so if we want her to send us home we must begin doing things right away."

"If mother was going to stay here I'd like to stay awhile," ventured Lamb.

"Well, she isn't going to stay. She is going early in the morning," answered Constance.

"I'm too young to be a 'J. F. F.,'" continued Lamb. "Rose Mason said I was, but she said that you could belong."

"I don't want to," declared Constance. "I shan't join anything. I told that fat girl next me, Myrtle Green, that we shouldn't be here long. And we can begin to do things by being late to breakfast tomorrow morning. Miss Wilson won't like that. We'll oversleep."

It proved rather a difficult matter to carry out this plan, for at seven o'clock the rising bell sounded through all the halls, so that even sleepy Lamb was wide awake.

"Don't get up," commanded Constance; "we won't get up until the breakfast bell rings."

At half-past seven the bell rang again, and then Constance and Lamb began slowly to make their preparations for breakfast. It was after eight when they tried the dining-room door.

"It's locked!" announced Constance, but just then the door was opened by a pleasant-faced waitress.

"I guess you are the little girls who came yesterday," she said; "so you can have your breakfast. But after this you must mind the bells or you won't get any breakfast."

"Where is our mother?" demanded Lamb, looking about the vacant dining-room.

Just then Miss Wilson came into the room. She greeted the little girls pleasantly.

"Too bad you slept too late to see your mother off," she said.

"Has mother gone?" both voices rose in a wail, and four anxious eyes were fixed on Miss Wilson.

"Yes," came the brief answer, but Lamb became conscious of a tender clasp about her shoulders, and even Constance yielded to the arm which drew her into a comforting embrace.

Nothing was said about coming down so late.

Neither Constance nor Lamb remembered to say "Peter" or "Lamb," but listened to what Miss Wilson had to tell them about their studies. After breakfast they found Myrtle Green waiting to go with them to the school building. They both felt homesick and deserted, but there were so many girls about that Lamb as well as Constance resolved not to let them see her cry.

"If I am the youngest girl here I'm not a baby," Lamb decided, and Constance was already comforting herself with the thought that she would soon be home again.

"I'll be sent home or I'll run away and go home," she resolved, when her books were given her and the tasks for the morning decided upon.

"Shall we be late to-morrow morning?" asked Lamb when the sisters found themselves together at luncheon.

Constance nodded. "Yes, we shall," she said; "and we'll be late to supper to-night. You go up to our room just before supper and so will I and we won't come down until supper is all over. We'll be late to everything now right along."

"Perhaps we won't get any supper if we are late," suggested Lamb.

"I hope we won't," declared Constance. "I guess our father won't let us stay here very long if they don't give us enough to eat."

Lamb made no response. Myrtle Green had been telling her about the gymnasium, and about the Saturday afternoon walks, and the lovely fudge that Rose Mason could make; and the little girl was beginning to think that school was not so bad a place after all. Several of the older girls had spoken to her, and she was sure that Myrtle Green was one of the nicest girls in the world.

The supper bell sounded that night but Constance and Eunice sat silent in their room. In a few minutes, however, there came a rap at the door and Miss Wilson entered.

"Supper is all ready, my dears," she said kindly, and there was nothing to do but go down to the dining-room. After supper that night Rose Mason suggested a game of dominoes and the hour passed very quickly.

"We'll be late to-morrow just the same," Constance whispered as the two girls went up-stairs to bed.

At the end of their first week in her house Miss Wilson began to be puzzled about the Newman girls. They were late at every meal, they were late at

recitations, and they persisted in calling each other nicknames. She had excused them to herself thinking that it was their first week away from home and that they would soon understand that the school rules must be obeyed. But she resolved to have a talk with them within a short time.

"We have been here a week," announced Lamb. "Now we can open Miss Abitha's present," and in a few moments the little girls were exclaiming over the pretty gymnasium suits. Myrtle Green was called in to see and admire.

"Put them on and come over to the gymnasium this afternoon," suggested Myrtle. "Miss Wilson will be there and she'll see what you can do. I'll come after you."

"I don't know as we'd better," objected Constance. "You see we don't expect to stay very long."

"Nonsense," replied Myrtle; "didn't I tell you that you'd have to stay a year anyway? But if you keep on being late to everything you won't stay, for Miss Wilson will send you home."

Constance turned a triumphant look toward her sister, but Lamb was admiring the new suit and did not see it.

"Perhaps you can get on the basket-ball team,"

continued Myrtle. "You're tall for your age, and Rose Mason, the captain, likes tall girls."

"What's basket-ball?" questioned Constance, and became so interested in Myrtle's explanation of the game that she entirely forgot that she did not mean to remain at the school.

CHAPTER VIII

A DIFFICULT LESSON

ROSE MASON watched Constance Newman approvingly. It was Constance's first day in the gymnasium and Rose had at once decided that she must persuade this new girl to join the basket-ball team. Rose was nearly sixteen. She had attended Miss Wilson's school two years and had come to be the leader of the school games. Most of the girls had great confidence in Rose Mason, and to be singled out by her as a companion for a walk or an excursion of any sort was looked upon as a great honor.

When Constance was ready to leave the gymnasium Rose approached her and said pleasantly :

"I'm glad you are to be here this year. I've been noticing that you've good arms and a steady head and I want you to learn basket-ball. I'm captain of the team here, and we need one more. Myrtle Green backed out, and it's just as well, she isn't tall enough anyway."

"I don't know much about the game," responded Constance.

"Oh, I'll teach you. We have practice to-morrow and if you'll come in you will get a good start."

Constance was pleased at Rose's attention, and when Myrtle Green told her that they wanted her to join the "J. F. F." Club she began to agree with Miss Abitha that there were lots of nice girls at school.

"It's a secret club," explained Myrtle; "the initiation fee is twenty-five cents, and members are assessed ten cents each month. Twice a year we have entertainments and a spread and ask the teachers. Of course if you join you have to be initiated and promise never to reveal the secrets of the club. We meet every Monday night in each other's rooms."

"Do all the girls belong?" questioned Constance.

"Well, I guess not," responded Myrtle loftily. "You have to be thirteen before you are eligible for membership anyway, and four girls here are only twelve."

"Do all the others belong?"

Myrtle tried to look very mysterious, and shook her head.

"No-o," she answered slowly, "you see there's a number of new girls just come in and Rose Mason isn't sure about them yet. There are only six members now, and the membership is limited to ten."

Constance began to realize that the "J. F. F." Club was really an important affair.

"I guess I should like to join, that is if I stay," she decided.

"Then you better change some of your ways," announced Myrtle firmly. "If you keep on being late all the time, and not answering promptly when the teachers speak to you, and calling your sister 'Lamb,' when you have been told to call her Eunice, why you'll find yourself going home in a hurry."

Constance looked at Myrtle in surprise. Was it possible that any girl could think it a misfortune to be sent home?

"Of course," Myrtle continued, "you have never been away from home before and don't realize how badly it looks to always be late for everything, meals, recitations, and all. And of course none of us blame your little sister, she's only a baby anyway, but the older girls think it's funny of you. Did Rose Mason say anything to you about it?"

"No, she didn't," began Constance angrily; she was just about to add that it wasn't any of Rose Mason's business, when she remembered about the basket-ball team and said no more. But that night Constance hurried Lamb into the dining-room in such good season that they were the first to sit down to supper. And she called her sister "Eunice" several times with

such distinctness that Lamb began to look at her anxiously.

The next morning Constance was out of bed at the first sound of the rising bell and at Lamb's suggestion, "Why, Sister, we shan't be late at all," responded vigorously, "I don't want to be late. The girls all think it's horrid to be late." So Lamb brushed her hair vigorously, tied her shoes rapidly and followed her sister down-stairs.

As they sat down to breakfast Constance noticed an envelope beside her plate. It was addressed to "Miss Constance Newman," and she slipped it into her pocket, and hurried through her breakfast and out into the hall to read it.

The letter was from Miss Wilson, and as Constance read a new and unknown feeling took possession of her. The note read:

"MY DEAR CONSTANCE:—

"I see that you are not happy here, and that you are not disposed to obey the rules of the school. During the two weeks that you have been here you have been careful to annoy your teachers in every possible way. I have therefore decided to write your parents in regard to the matter and ask them to come and take you home.

"Your friend,
"MARY WILSON."

The girl crushed the note in her hand. She wanted to cry, but the girls were coming out from breakfast. Lamb had gone happily off to school with some of the younger girls. Constance ran out of the house and walked down toward the lake. What should she do? Thanks to Myrtle Green she realized that to be sent home was a disgrace. That it would be because she could not behave as well as these other girls, "and some of them only twelve years old," she said aloud. Then she remembered about the "J. F. F." Club, and the basket-ball team, and Rose Mason. "I wonder what she'd think about me if I am sent home," thought Constance.

She stayed so long by the lake that she was late at the morning recitation and Miss Wilson looked at her disapprovingly. She could not think about her lesson, and so made a failure when called upon to recite. As the girls left the recitation room Miss Wilson said, "Constance Newman will please keep her seat," and in a few moments the girl was alone with her teacher.

Miss Wilson came and sat down beside Constance.

"Have you been homesick here, my dear?" she asked.

"Not but a little," answered Constance.

"But you don't like the girls?"

"Oh, yes, I do," quickly answered the girl. "I think Rose Mason is splendid and I like Myrtle Green."

"But you would rather be at home?"

"Why, of course!" exclaimed Constance.

"Don't you think that your mother and father will be sorry to have their daughter sent home?"

Constance smiled at this. She remembered, however, that the running away had made her father very angry and that even Grandfather Newman did not approve of it.

"I guess if you send me home they won't blame me," she ventured; "and I wasn't late to breakfast this morning."

"You were late at recitation."

"I didn't mean to be," confessed Constance. "I went off to think about this letter and I forgot how late it was."

At this Miss Wilson's face softened into a smile and she looked at Constance more kindly.

"I am almost sorry to have you go," she said, rising; "but perhaps your mother can find another school where you will be happier. I wrote that I should expect her to come for you this week, so you will only

have a few days more to stay," and Miss Wilson rose and left the room.

Constance looked after her in amazement. So it was as easy as this to be sent home. "It was Lamb's plan," she thought; "she was the first one to think of it," but she began to realize that she herself was the one to blame. She it was who had carried out the plan and she was the one to be blamed.

The dinner-bell rang as she sat there.

"Now I'm late again," she exclaimed and hurried out of the school building and ran across the driveway and into the house in time to take her seat with the others.

Myrtle Green nodded at her approvingly. "You are doing first-rate," she whispered. "You haven't been late for three meals."

Constance made no answer. She was sure that she would cry if she tried to speak. Lamb was telling Rose Mason that the younger girls were going to get up a club too. "I guess I'll be president," she heard Lamb say, and realized that her little sister did not know of what had happened. "Perhaps they are going to let Lamb stay," she thought.

"Come on, Constance," called Rose Mason as they left the dinner table, "get on your gym suit and I'll

show you how to throw the ball into the basket."

Constance nodded her acceptance and ran up-stairs. She sobbed a little as she put on the pretty serge suit. "I guess Miss Abitha won't ever like me again," she thought, but hurried down to join Rose.

A half-hour's exercise with the ball found her in better spirits, and she began to wonder if there was not some way out of her trouble. Of course it would be lovely to be home again at Pine Tree farm. But to be sent home in disgrace was a different matter; and even home would lose its charm if Lamb was not there, and Constance felt sure that Lamb was to remain at school.

She wished she could ask Rose Mason what to do, but she was ashamed to tell her. Two days dragged miserably by, and then one afternoon, she saw Miss Abitha Bean standing at the door waiting for her. "I suppose my mother was ashamed to come," Constance thought.

Miss Abitha seemed as happy as if she had not come on such a dreadful errand, and Constance looked at her reproachfully. Lamb thought it was the loveliest thing that could possibly happen to have Miss Abitha come for a visit, as Constance had not even told her little sister of Miss Wilson's decision to send her home.

"One of my very best pupils," Miss Wilson had said when she introduced Miss Abitha to the girls. And Rose Mason said that her mother knew Miss Abitha, and in a short time there was a group of girls around the pleasant-faced woman and she was telling them what a beautiful place Pine Tree farm was, and of the good times she had as a girl at school.

Constance listened sulkily. She began to feel ill-treated and misunderstood. Miss Abitha went upstairs with the sisters that night.

"Do you want me to help you pack, Constance? You know we start early in the morning."

Then Constance threw herself on the little bed and cried heartily; and Lamb, hearing the story and realizing that she was to be left behind began to cry also, and Miss Abitha began to feel that she had a difficult task before her.

"I don't want to be sent home," wailed Constance, and, "I don't want to be left all alone," cried Lamb. But at last quiet was established.

"I think that you can both stay here and be as happy as your mother and I were," declared Miss Abitha. "I am sure I can persuade Miss Wilson to let Constance stay."

At this Constance dried her eyes, and, after a little

more talk and many promises, Miss Abitha went in search of Miss Wilson and soon returned with a smiling face.

"I am going home in the morning," she announced, "but Constance is to stay and Lamb is to stay, and I shan't see you again until you come home for the Christmas holidays; and then we'll all have a lovely time."

CHAPTER IX

INITIATED INTO THE "J. F. F."

"YOU have been voted into the 'J. F. F.' Club, Constance," Myrtle Green announced, about a week after Miss Abitha's visit, "and you are to be initiated in Rose Mason's room to-morrow night at eight o'clock. You had better be on hand by quarter before eight. Rap three times on her door. One long rap, and two short ones, then you will be admitted."

"What will I have to do?" Constance asked anxiously.

"Bring twenty-five cents," responded Myrtle, "and that's all I can tell you."

Constance could hardly wait for the time to come. To be a member of a club seemed a very wonderful thing; and she wondered what the initiation would be. She had looked up the word "initiation" in the big dictionary in the library and found that it meant "entrance," "admission," "reception." This did not seem very terrifying, but Myrtle's air of mystery made Constance sure that it was something out of the usual.

"You tell me all about it to-morrow, won't you, Sister?" asked Lamb sleepily, as Constance was ready to start for Rose Mason's room.

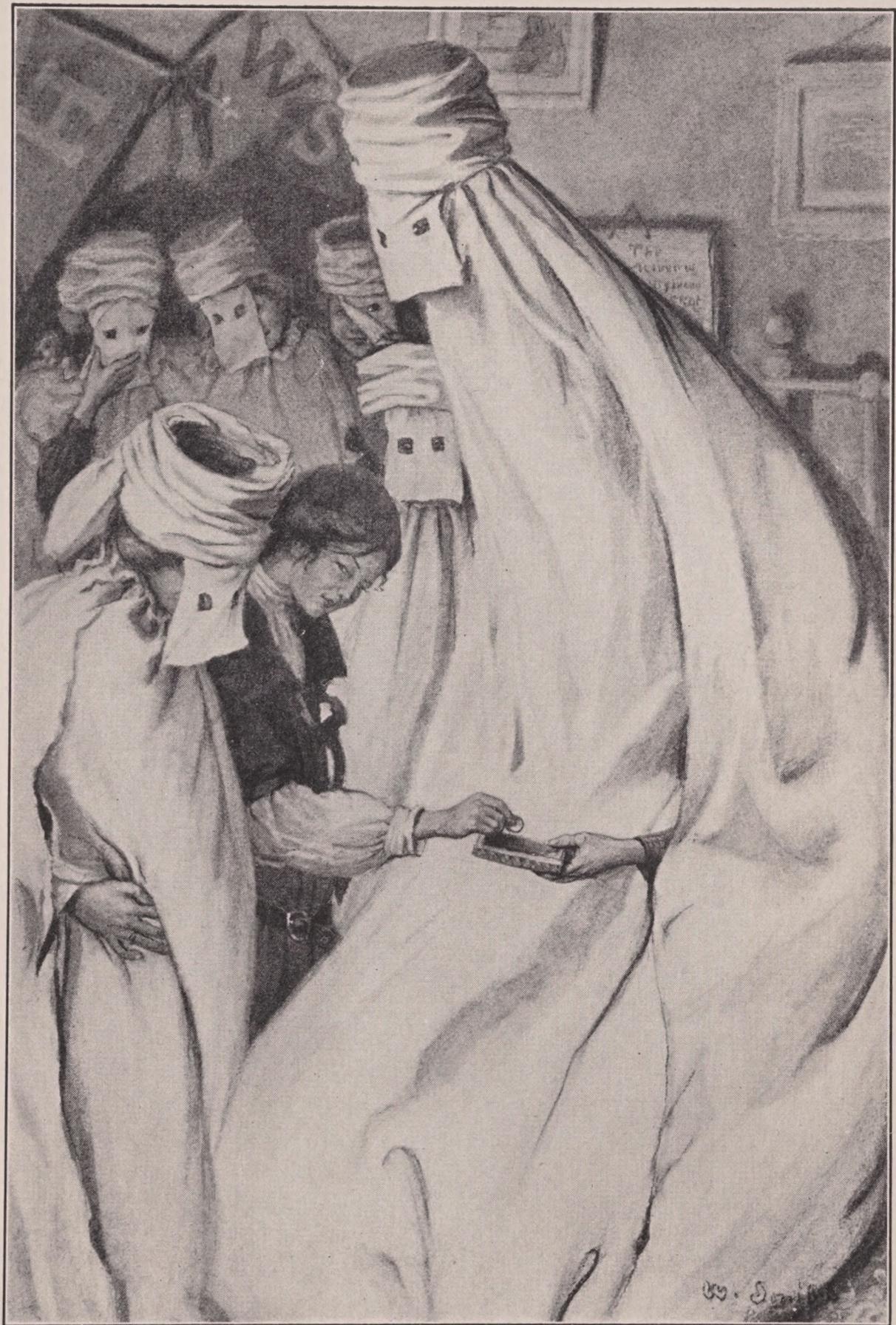
"No, indeed," replied Constance, "to belong to this club you have to promise never to repeat any of the by-laws or tell anything that happens. It is a secret club."

"Well, I hate secrets," announced Lamb, "and we younger girls are going to have a club that anybody can belong to that knows how to skate, and I'm going to be president, and we are to meet on the lake every day right after afternoon session."

Constance laughed at Lamb's idea of a club, and hurried down the corridor to Rose Mason's room. She felt a little frightened as she gave the three raps and saw the door slowly open.

"Enter," said a deep voice, and Constance stepped inside, and the door closed behind her and was quickly fastened.

Fortunately Myrtle had given the new member of the "J. F. F." Club the expectation of something unusual, so Constance did not exclaim at the strange figures she saw before her. The doorkeeper was attired in a trailing robe of crimson cambric. It hung in folds from her neck, and lay on the floor so that



PAY YOUR INITIATION FEE

if she started to walk she was apt to stumble. On her head was a turban of the cambric and a square piece, with places cut for eye-holes, fell over the face.

On the bed sat a tall figure all in white. So tall that its head seemed nearly to reach the ceiling, but when it spoke the voice seemed to come much lower down. Four other figures in white stood about the room, and as Constance entered two advanced and bowed before her. Then, each one took her by the hand and led her toward the tall figure on the bed.

"Welcome," exclaimed a gruff voice that Constance could not recognize. "Are you prepared to join this club and swear that you will not reveal its secrets?"

"Say, 'I am,'" whispered one of Constance's attendants.

"I am."

"Pay your initiation fee," commanded the voice, and Constance dropped her quarter into a small box that the figure extended toward her.

"Do you solemnly promise to be a faithful club member, to attend all meetings, to stand by each and every member of the 'J. F. F.' Club and to obey its rules?"

"Say, 'I do,'" said the girl at Constance's right hand.



"I do."

"'Tis well! Her Highness, the Guardian of the Door, will approach," commanded the voice; and the figure in the crimson robe stumbled toward the bed and bowed low.

"Your Highness may conduct Constance Newman to the end of the council chamber and reveal to her the meaning of 'J. F. F.,'" declared the voice.

The two figures in white released Constance and the Guardian of the Door led her across the room and whispered three words in her ear. As she heard them Constance laughed, and a subdued giggle was heard from the direction of the bed.

"Her Highness the Guardian of the Robes will now bestow upon our sister the robe of membership," came the command and in a moment a robe of white muslin was slipped over Constance's head, the turban and mask were adjusted, and Constance's initiation was over.

"We will now hear the roll-call," commanded the tall figure.

"Myrtle Green."

"Here," answered the figure in crimson.

"Rose Mason."

"Here," responded the tall figure on the bed, and



the others answered in turn. Then the "robes of membership" were slipped off and put carefully away in a large box. Rose Mason's extreme height proved due to a dressed up broomstick which she had held in front of her.

"I think 'Just For Fun' is a lovely name for a club," declared Constance.

"Sshh——" sounded from all the other members, and, "you must never speak it out loud," sounded a chorus of voices.

"You see," explained Rose, "if we get in the habit of speaking the name we might do it before some of the younger girls, and then the letters wouldn't mean anything, and the secret would be out."

In honor of the new member refreshments were served. Rose Mason had made a large dish of fudge, Myrtle Green brought a large bag of peanuts that she had bought on her last trip to the village; and they devoured these delicacies and made plans for an entertainment to be given by the club just before the Christmas holidays.

"Go softly, girls," said Rose, as the hour's session came to an end; "don't make any noise in going to your rooms or you may disturb the other girls, and then Miss Wilson won't like it."

Constance tiptoed all the way to her room, for she wanted to be sure and not give Miss Wilson any reason for being displeased with her. Lamb was sound asleep, and did not waken, although she had meant to persuade Sister to tell her all about the "J. F. F."

The next day was Saturday and Miss Wilson was to take ten of the younger girls on a nutting expedition. Both Sister and Lamb had been included in the number.

Directly after breakfast the little party were ready to start for the woods. There were baskets containing the luncheon, and as they started off both Lamb and Sister were reminded of Miss Abitha's picnics at Pine Tree farm.

Constance found herself walking beside Miss Wilson.

"It seems as if Miss Abitha ought to be here," said the little girl; "for every picnic we ever had she always planned."

"I wish she were here," responded Miss Wilson cordially. "She went to school to my elder sister, and, years ago, we tried to persuade Miss Abitha to come here as one of our teachers; but she did not want to leave her father."

"She taught us at Pine Tree farm," said Constance; "but it was fun to go to school to her. She played that her sitting-room was a schoolroom, and if we brought our dolls she would call them distinguished visitors, and have a lesson about the dolls of every country. And we had lessons about Jet, our pony, and about Shep, the dog, and about the kittens and everything," and Constance sighed a little as she finished.

"That is just like Miss Abitha," replied Miss Wilson cordially. "She was a born teacher, and you and Eunice were very fortunate in her instruction."

"But we like your school now, Miss Wilson," declared Constance; and then, almost before she knew it Constance found herself telling Miss Wilson the whole story of not wanting to leave Pine Tree farm. Of the plan to run away and its failure, and then of thinking perhaps Miss Wilson would send them home.

"You see," explained Constance, "I didn't know that the other girls thought it would be a disgrace to be sent home; and I didn't know that it would make my mother and father ashamed of us. But I found that out by what the girls said, and then of course I didn't want to be sent home."

"Of course you didn't," responded the teacher;

"and don't you think it was worth while to come away from home and learn what other girls think about things?"

"Y-e-s," replied Constance slowly; "but we do have lovely times with grandfather."

After that day's excursion Constance felt that Miss Wilson was a real friend, and she understood why Rose Mason and Myrtle Green were so anxious to please her.

"There's a little surprise for you and your sister late in the term," continued Miss Wilson. "Of course I shan't tell you what it is, but it is something that I know will please you." So Constance had a great many pleasant things to wonder about and hope for. There were the meetings of the "J. F. F." Club, the surprise that Miss Wilson had told her about, and the basket-ball practice. Constance was very anxious to be a member of the school team. Especially so when she found that there was to be a match game between the high school girls of a neighbouring town, and the girls of Miss Wilson's school.

"I guess Grandfather Newman would think it was fine if I was on the basket-ball team, and it won the match," she confided to Miss Wilson.

"I am sure he would," responded the teacher.

They had lunch that day under a fine chestnut tree, and Lamb told the girls of the baby foxes she had almost tamed; and of their coming back to the vicinity of the farm. The girls listened eagerly, and began to think that Pine Tree farm must be the nicest place possible.

"Come, Sister," whispered Lamb as they finished lunch; "let's go down this hill a little way; I saw lots of chestnut burrs under those trees."

But when they reached the spot the burrs were found empty. Looking up the girls could see that many burrs still clung to the branches.

"I wish we had a pole," said Constance, but there was no pole obtainable. The other members of the party were scattered about further down the slope where the trees grew more thickly.

"If this tree wasn't so big we could shake them off," exclaimed Lamb, vainly endeavoring to move the solid trunk by pushing against it.

"I know what we can do," declared Constance; "those limbs are not very high, and I can climb up and give them a good shaking."

"So you can," said Lamb, and encouraged by her sister's confidence Constance set down her basket, and regarded the tree more carefully.

"I can give a jump and catch hold of that lower limb," she announced, and at the same time sprang upward with outstretched hands.

She caught the limb, but it was not strong enough to bear her weight, and an instant later she and the branch fell together, and poor Lamb, who stood gazing upward with admiring eyes was toppled over with Constance on top of her.

"O-oh," wailed the little girl, and then lay still, so very still that Constance, half stunned by the fall, scrambled hastily to her feet.

"Get up, Lamb," she commanded, but Lamb still lay on her face, her right arm doubled under her, and moaned:

"I've broke my hand off, Sister, I've broke my hand off."

Constance's cries soon brought Miss Wilson to the rescue, and Lamb was lifted up and comforted as much as possible.

"I'm afraid the wrist is broken," declared Miss Wilson; "we must hurry home as fast as possible."

CHAPTER X

A "U. S." PARTY

WHEN Grandfather Newman heard about Lamb's broken wrist he returned to his first opinion in regard to sending the girls away to school, and insisted upon starting at once to bring her home. To this her mother and father consented, as they felt that by this time Constance would be used to her new surroundings and would not be homesick without her sister; and they all acknowledged that Pine Tree farm was a lonely place without Sister and Lamb.

"I expect it will be hard work to persuade 'Peter' to stay at school when she sees Lamb and me starting for home," chuckled Grandfather Newman as he made his preparations for the journey.

Miss Abitha laughed and shook her head. "Don't be surprised if neither of the girls want to come home," she responded. "They are just getting interested in the other girls, and in their lessons and sports, and you mustn't be disappointed if they want to stay."

Grandfather looked at Miss Abitha as if he were quite sure that she had taken leave of her senses.

"Not want to come home!" he exclaimed; "when they just about broke their poor little hearts at the idea of going away!" and grandfather laughed heartily.

"Well, well," he concluded, "I'll tell you all about it when I bring Lamb home. I suppose poor 'Peter' will have to stick it out until Christmas."

Jimmie Woodyear had a box of spruce gum to send to Constance, grandmother had baked a wonderful cake to send, and her father and mother purchased a fine pair of skates.

"She'll need something to take up her mind, poor child, and comfort her when she finds that she can't come home with Lamb," said grandfather as he took charge of the packages.

Lamb's wrist did not prove very painful, but it was hard to carry one arm in a sling all the time and give up so many good times with the girls. The nights were getting cold, and they were all eagerly watching the pond hoping that it would soon freeze over so that they could have skating. Lamb, as president of the new club, felt that it was very hard not to have the use of her arm.

"Your Grandfather Newman will be here to-day, Eunice," said Miss Wilson, the third morning after the accident.

"Oh! Goody, goody!" exclaimed both the girls, and Miss Wilson smiled at their delight.

"Your mother writes that she has decided it will be best for you to come home, where she can look after the broken wrist," continued Miss Wilson; "so you will probably see Pine Tree farm to-morrow."

She smiled again as she noticed the expression upon the girls' faces, for she remembered how anxious they had been to return home a few weeks earlier, and now it was very evident that they wanted to remain at school.

"Eunice go home?" exclaimed Constance. "Why I can take care of her, can't I, Miss Wilson?"

"Go home?" echoed Lamb, in much the same tone that she had said "go to school" a few months earlier.

"Perhaps it will be better for Lamb to be at home the remainder of this term," responded Miss Wilson, and the girls listened in silence. It was now early November, and two months seemed a long time for the sisters to be separated. But when grandfather appeared they were so glad to see him and had so many questions to ask about everybody at home that they did not think much about school plans until Mr. Newman gave Constance her presents.

"I'm so glad grandmother thought about a cake,"

she exclaimed. "You see the 'J. F. F.' Club meets in my room to-morrow night and it will be just splendid to have this cake for a treat; and I guess some of the girls will like the gum, too," she added, looking approvingly at Jimmie's gift.

Grandfather Newman could hardly believe his own ears. Was it possible that his own "Peter" could think that school was as pleasant a place as Pine Tree farm; and not even ask to be taken home?

"Well, well," he said slowly; "so you like school after all, do you, Peter?"

"Oh, yes, grandfather, it's just as Miss Abitha said; there are so many nice girls; Rose Mason and Myrtle Green are fine, and Rose is captain of the basket-ball team and she told me this very morning that she was going to take me on the team. I want you to come over to the gym and see us practice. Oh, grandfather, it's fine to know girls like Rose Mason."

"Is, eh?" responded grandfather. "Well, what is she like?"

"Oh, she's tall and straight, and strong. I do believe she is as strong as Jimmie Woodyear; of course she is almost grown up, she's nearly sixteen, and she knows just what to do about everything."

She helps the younger girls a lot with their studies, and she's never hateful and always pleasant."

"Well, well," repeated Grandfather Newman thoughtfully; "I guess that's the right kind of a girl, don't you think so, Peter?"

"Oh, yes," answered Constance confidently. "I have told her how lovely Pine Tree farm is, and all about you, and she thinks Lamb and I are lucky girls."

Grandfather's face brightened at this, and as he saw how contented the children were he began to think that school was a pretty good place after all.

"I'm coming back just as soon as I can," Lamb whispered when she bade Rose Mason good-bye. The little girl began to feel that a broken wrist was not such a misfortune after all if it brought Grandfather Newman to take one back to Pine Tree farm. Grandfather had whispered that there was a pair of skates waiting for Lamb at home, "and I shouldn't be surprised if there was another cake by the time we get there," he declared.

"I guess Jet and Shep and the kittens will be glad to see me," said Lamb as they journeyed toward home; "and I'll have lots of things to tell Sister when she gets home. How long does it take for a broken wrist to mend, grandfather?"

"I guess a little wrist like yours ought to be sound and well before Christmas," replied grandfather; "and you and Miss Abitha can have famous times skating and sleigh-riding."

"I don't believe in spoiling children," said Grandmother Newman to her daughter on the day that Lamb arrived home; "but of course the dear child is going to miss her sister dreadfully and we must plan to do everything we can to make her happy. I was thinking," and grandmother hesitated a moment and then went on slowly, "I was thinking that we ought to plan something special for Lamb right away so she will see how happy we all are to have her home again."

"We might speak to Abitha about it," responded young Mrs. Newman.

So Miss Abitha was consulted and at once suggested a plan that greatly pleased Grandmother Newman.

"We will have a 'U. S.' party!" Miss Abitha had exclaimed, "and we will have it at my house and Lamb need not know a thing about it until the time comes. We will have it next Saturday and Jimmie Woodyear will help me get ready."

Lamb was to continue her lessons with Miss Abitha. She had brought home her school books, and Miss

Wilson had sent Miss Abitha a letter; for Lamb was anxious to keep up with her class.

"What will we do Saturdays, Miss Abitha?" Lamb had questioned, for Saturday had always meant something special in the way of a good time to the girls before they went away to school, and Miss Abitha laughed gayly and responded, "You just wait and see!" in so mysterious a manner that Lamb knew there was a good time in store, and could hardly wait for Saturday to come.

"Miss Abitha has asked us all over to have supper with her on Saturday night," said Lamb's mother; "and she and Jimmie are so mysterious that I expect there will be a surprise for us. She does not want us to come over until exactly six."

"What do you suppose it is, father?" questioned Lamb as they entered the gate and went up to Miss Abitha's front door. Just then the front door opened. "Oh! oh!" exclaimed Lamb, for there in the door stood a young Indian. Two bright red feathers stood straight up on his head. His face was a deep brown. He wore moccasins, and a red striped blanket was draped from his shoulders.

"Pale-face, welcome," said this brave, and Lamb ventured to look more closely. "Jimmie," she ex-

claimed ; and the Indian's mouth widened into a ready smile, but he made no response.

When they entered the sitting-room Lamb exclaimed again, and so did all the Newmans, for they hardly recognized the room. As they went in the door they seemed to enter a brush wigwam, for the walls were hidden by thick branches of spruce ; young fir trees stood in the corners of the room, the furniture had all been removed and the only seats were piles of spruce boughs covered with fur robes and blankets. The room was dimly lighted by lanterns hung here and there, and in the centre of the floor lay Shep, evidently well contented with his surroundings.

They had just seated themselves when a blanket curtain at one end of the room was drawn aside and an Indian princess entered. She, too, wore feathers in her hair ; but hers were like a crown and fell down her back like a long plume. Her moccasins were covered with bright beads, and she wore a brown skirt and red waist with bands of bright colors. The older Newmans laughed heartily as she approached, and so did Lamb when she realized that it really was Miss Abitha.

“ Isn't it a lovely surprise, grandmother ! ” she ex-

claimed, and just then the Indian princess led the way toward the kitchen.

At the kitchen door she rapped twice. "Enter," called a loud voice, and the door swung slowly open and then not only Lamb exclaimed but so did all the others. The floor of the kitchen was covered with spruce boughs.

At the further end of the room was a little platform and on this platform stood a tall figure. He wore a high white hat, blue-and-white striped trousers, a blue vest and blue swallow-tailed coat with big brass buttons. Directly back of him was draped a large American flag. "Uncle Sam," whispered Lamb, and just then the Indian princess and the young brave advanced toward the platform and kneeled before the tall figure.

"Arise, my children," said the deep voice, and "Uncle Sam" took off his tall hat; and then it flashed through Lamb's mind what it meant. "It's the United States welcoming Indians as citizens," exclaimed the little girl, remembering Miss Abitha's lessons on American history. Then Grandfather Newman clapped his hands loudly, and so did all the rest of the party; and Uncle Sam, who, of course, was Mr. Eben Bean, led the way to the round table that was

spread with cold turkey, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie, and a wonderful cake with a white sugar lamb on top. And not only Lamb exclaimed in wonder and delight but all the company could not praise Miss Abitha enough.

"I call it simply wonderful the way Abitha thinks of things," said Grandmother Newman.

After supper they returned to the "wigwam" and Mr. Eben Bean and Grandfather Newman both told stories of the early settlement of Maine, and of the Indians who had their lodges in the very valley where Pine Tree farm now was. When it was time to go home the Indian brave walked beside Lamb carrying the wonderful cake.

Constance's mother wrote her all about the "United States" party; and when Constance told Miss Wilson about it she said, "I always knew Abitha was a wonder. What a teacher she would make for a girls' school!"

"But we can't spare her at Pine Tree farm," replied Constance laughingly.

CHAPTER XI

JIMMIE KILLS A LYNX

WHEN Mr. Eben Bean heard of Jimmie Woodyear's plan to earn a farm he at once offered to help him.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he exclaimed ; "the fall work is pretty well over now ; apples all gathered, oats threshed, and there's a sort of lull in the farming business, and I'll speak to Mr. Newman and see if he and Henry and I can't go up and help you out a little. We'll give you a day's work in cutting down that white birch, and that will give you quite a start."

"I suppose Lamb wouldn't want to come and have a picnic dinner, would she ?" suggested Jimmie.

Mr. Bean shook his head. "Not this time, I guess," he replied. "I've about made up my mind that it is a good thing for girls to go to school," he announced. "They thought it was hard to leave home, but there's a sight of things for young folks to learn and they can't learn all of 'em at home."

Mr. Newman and his son were glad to give Jimmie a day's work on his "farm," and the first leisure Saturday found them all hard at work cutting down

the thick growth of young birches. Mr. Newman declared that it would be fine land for potatoes, and Henry Newman advised Jimmie to select his acre of land facing the highway.

"Then when you come to put up a house it will be easier for you," he said.

"Rather a lonesome place," remarked Grandfather Newman.

"I shan't care for that if I can have some good land," declared Jimmie; "and I know mother won't care either if we can ever own a place of our own."

Jimmie used all his leisure time in clearing the land. He found a purchaser for the white birch and before Christmas he was the proud owner of two acres of land; for with the money he received for the wood and his own savings he had purchased the second acre from Miss Abitha.

One day in late December Miss Abitha came over to the farm all ready for a snow-shoe trip. She wore her short skirt, stout jacket, warm hood and mittens, and had a small basket fastened over her shoulder by a strap. Jimmie was just sharpening his axe before starting for his "farm."

"I'm going over with you, Jimmie," she announced; "and I have our lunch right in this basket, so don't

expect us home till you see us," and waving a good-bye to Grandmother Newman, who stood in the doorway watching them, they started off across the white fields.

Squirrels chattered at them from the fence posts, and now and then some winter-loving bird flew across their way, but the day was very still and the air sharp and frosty.

"How will you keep warm after we get to the clearing, Miss Abitha?" questioned Jimmie. "I shall be warm enough chopping, and I can make you up a big bonfire, but I'm afraid you won't be very warm."

"Wait and see," laughed Miss Abitha. "I can always be comfortable out-of-doors, and I have a plan."

As soon as they reached the clearing they both went to work gathering wood for a big fire.

"Look!" exclaimed Jimmie, pointing to some tracks in the snow. "That looks as if a big cat had been walking around here. Mr. Henry Newman told me he killed a lynx in these woods once. I wish I could kill one."

Miss Abitha laughed. "I'm afraid it's only a fox's tracks," she said.

Jimmie had built the fire directly in front of a big

half-decayed log. He had spread his thick coat on the log to make a seat for Miss Abitha, and she had slipped off her snow-shoes to rest her feet.

"A lynx is rather a dangerous animal, I've heard," continued Miss Abitha. "I remember when Henry Newman killed the one you speak of. It was in the fall and he was out shooting partridge and the creature jumped at him from a tree. He fired at it but only wounded the creature, and he clubbed it to death with his rifle. He had to kill it. We all thought he was pretty brave."

"I should say so," responded Jimmie. "I'm going right across here to chop; if you want me, call, and I'll be sure to hear you."

Miss Abitha nodded. "I'm going to do a little exploring myself," she replied; "but I shan't be far away. There's a bunch of spruce trees near, where I used to get spruce gum when I was a girl, and that's what I came after to-day. But I'll keep an eye on the fire. I want to get some good hot ashes to roast our potatoes," and with a gay little laugh Miss Abitha began to put on her snow-shoes while Jimmie started off to his work.

When Miss Abitha rose from the old log she thought that something moved behind her, and looked up ex-

pecting to catch a glimpse of a squirrel or partridge, but could see nothing, and started off in the direction of the spruce trees. She had a stout, one-bladed jack-knife with her and was soon digging the fragrant gum from the trees. It did not take her long to secure all she wanted, and then she began to think about roasting the potatoes for lunch and turned back toward the clearing.

She came out near the fire and looking toward the edge of the wood where Jimmie was at work, she stopped in terror.

A long black creature was creeping noiselessly across the white snow toward the boy.

“A lynx,” screamed Miss Abitha, and without a thought for her own safety she rushed toward the animal calling, “Jimmie! Jimmie!”

At the first sound of her voice the boy had turned, and instantly understood his own peril. The lynx was not fifty feet away from him. The animal turned also, and at the sight of Miss Abitha rushing toward him he hesitated. Her loud calls and waving arms almost terrified the creature, and had Miss Abitha kept on he would doubtless have fled before her. But as the lynx turned and faced her Miss Abitha came to a full stop.

The creature evidently felt that this new and noisy unknown being was more dangerous than the boy upon whom it had been prepared to spring; so it crouched down and eyed Miss Abitha angrily, making up its mind to attack her if she made a motion.

Jimmie realized instantly that his friend was in greater danger than himself. His axe was sharp, his muscles strong and well developed, and he remembered that Henry Newman had clubbed one of these creatures to death with a gun. With a yell that echoed through the frosty air Jimmie rushed toward his enemy and the lynx sprang about to face this new peril.

Boy and lynx rushed toward each other. Jimmie raised his axe at the right moment and a long swinging stroke caught the animal on the side of its head with such force that the creature was hurled sideways and fell senseless. Jimmie was quick to make the most of his good luck and hurried after the animal and with a few swift strokes made sure that it was dead.

Miss Abitha had not moved, but when Jimmie turned toward her he was startled at her white face.

"It can't hurt us now," he called out triumphantly.
"I've killed it."

"You saved my life, Jimmie," said Miss Abitha.

"I guess it's the other way and you saved mine," responded the boy. "That lynx would have sprung on my back if you hadn't have called out just as you did and rushed at him. Say, Miss Abitha," continued the boy admiringly, "you were awful brave to run at him that way."

"Reckless," said Miss Abitha; "but let me look at the creature if you are sure it's dead."

Jimmie straightened the lynx out at full length and Miss Abitha looked at it admiringly. Its fur was long and glossy and Jimmie's axe had not injured it.

"I'll get a good price for the skin," said Jimmie.

"We must take it home with us," declared Miss Abitha. "You cut down a sapling and we can fasten its feet to the sapling and carry it home. You must have string in your pockets."

"Yes, I have," answered the boy, and in a short time he had cut down a stout sapling and the lynx was fastened securely to it.

"I can take one end and you the other," said Miss Abitha. "I don't believe it weighs more than thirty pounds."

Jimmie was inclined to think that fifty would be nearer the correct weight.

"I believe the creature was in that hollow log," said Miss Abitha, after they had put out the fire and were ready to start for home. "I heard a rustling noise there when I started after the gum."

They made rather slow progress toward home and their arms ached long before they came in sight of Pine Tree farm. When they were nearly home Miss Abitha began to laugh. "Jimmie," she said, "our lunch basket is up on that old log and we never thought about eating."

"I guess not after such a catch as this," answered the boy looking at the lynx admiringly.

Mr. Eben Bean and Grandfather Newman hurried to meet them and bring home the unexpected burden, and there were many exclamations over Jimmie's courage and skill. Mr. Henry Newman offered to dispose of the skin for Jimmie. "It will bring you ten dollars," he declared, "so you have done quite a good morning's work."

CHAPTER XII

THE YOUNGEST GIRL ON THE TEAM

THE "J. F. F." Club voted that Constance's cake from home was the best treat of the term, and they all looked with approval upon the spruce gum. Practice at basket-ball proved more and more interesting, and Constance found little time to be homesick.

"I think Rose means to put you into the game as centre," confided Myrtle Green one day as they walked down to the lake to look at the smooth skim over the water that was daily growing more solid.

Constance shook her head doubtfully. "That is too good to even think about, Myrtle," she answered. "If I get into the match game as a guard I shall think it's a wonder."

"Well, I have been watching your practice," responded Myrtle; "and you don't hang on to the ball like most beginners. Rose has been watching you, too."

Constance flushed happily at this praise. "I don't think much of our forwards," she ventured. "Of course I don't know everything about basket-ball, but

it seemed to me yesterday when we had team practice that the forwards did not see half their chances."

"Good for you," exclaimed Myrtle. "I might as well tell you what Rose Mason says about your playing. She says that you were just made for basketball. She likes you a lot, too, in other ways," and Myrtle looked at Constance to see how she received such high commendation.

"I'm going to do the best I can," Constance responded. "If we play with the high school girls on Thanksgiving day we shall only have a week's more practice."

"The game is to be in our gym after all," announced Myrtle. "I expect there will be a crowd up from the village to see it. Most of those girls are older than the girls here, and they think it's quite a condescension to play with Miss Wilson's 'Kids,' as they call us; but I guess we'll show them."

"I guess we will," responded Constance valiantly.

Rose Mason had urged upon her players the necessity of doing their best in the coming match. All those chosen for the match game had had more experience than Constance, and to her Rose devoted much time.

"You are quick with your hands and you think

quickly," she told her new recruit; "but there is a lot to basket-ball. If you run against another girl in the game just remember that it's no place to waste valuable time in apologies; and if your wrist gets a twist it isn't the place to cry about it. Basket-ball gives one a lot of judgment and self-control. You are pretty young to be put in a match game, the youngest girl on the team, but you are tall and strong, and if you don't get rattled you can help us win."

Constance listened attentively, and promised to do her best.

"There's something else I want to talk to you about," continued Captain Rose. "You are listed for centre. Now I don't know the girl who is to play centre for the high school, but I'll tell you one thing, whoever she is, she won't take her eyes from the referee until the ball is in play. Just remember that," and Constance promised. A new ambition was beginning to take form in Constance's thoughts. This was Rose Mason's last year at Miss Wilson's school. Next year there would have to be a new captain for the basket-ball team, and Constance determined that if good playing could win that honor it should be hers.

The hour appointed for the game was eleven o'clock on Thanksgiving morning. By half-past ten the

gymnasium galleries were filled with interested spectators. The umpires had carefully examined the baskets to see that they were securely fastened against the wall. The scorer, timekeeper, and linesmen had taken their places ; and the referee, ball in hand, was waiting for the players to come on to the floor.

At two minutes before eleven Rose Mason, followed by Constance, and the forwards and guards came into place and were enthusiastically cheered by their schoolmates. Immediately their opponents appeared, the captains stepped forward, the ball was handed to Rose, and the captains tossed for choice of goals. Rose won. Then the referee put the ball into play and the great game had begun.

Constance had but a moment to look at the centre opposed to her ; but that was time enough to realize that her opponent was a tall girl with broad shoulders and long arms ; then Constance fixed her eyes on the referee, ready to spring for the ball the moment it was in the air. She noticed the position of her forwards and hoped that they would prove more alert than they had in practice.

Up went the ball and two slender figures sprang for it. It was Constance who felt the ball in her hands. Instantly she tossed it to the nearest forward,



UP WENT THE BALL

who proved worthy her confidence and moved it on with such swiftness that it was in their opponents' basket before the high school girls had realized their position.

The ball was put into play again, and again Constance was the fortunate one, but this time the forwards hesitated, and the guards had their share of work in protecting their basket.

After fifteen minutes' brisk play came the intermission. Rose Mason's players had won four points. Rose found time to whisper to Constance, "you are all right," and Constance glowed and brightened under her praise.

Again came the quick jump for the ball, and Constance missed. Not only missed but as her feet touched the floor she felt a sharp wrench, a stinging pain, and for one instant felt that she must cry out with pain and hobble off the field. But she faced her opponent to the centre and cleverly prevented the ball from reaching its destination. She heard the delighted applause of her schoolmates, but the twinge in her ankle grew sharper; how could she bear another leap? "Basket-ball is no place to cry," she remembered, and played bravely on. There was no other centre upon whom Rose Mason could rely. "I must

hold out," resolved the girl, and she kept her place bravely and played well.

"Everything is going Rose Mason's way," declared one of the visitors.

"Well, it's all on account of the girl playing centre," was the response; and Myrtle Green overheard and treasured the words. "Constance will be captain herself some day," she thought proudly.

Captain Rose was delighted at the success of her team. The honors were all theirs; and the high school girls were the first to congratulate and compliment them.

"Your centre is a dandy," declared the captain to Rose, "but I think she's twisted her ankle or something——" but before she could finish Rose had rushed after Constance, to find her sitting huddled up on her locker holding on to her foot and looking very white.

Miss Wilson was summoned to the rescue, and declared it was only a slight sprain. Hot water was quickly obtained, and in an hour Constance declared the pain nearly gone; nevertheless she could not put her foot to the floor without severe twinges.

"You are a perfect heroine," declared Myrtle Green, as the girls gathered about. "To think of

your having the grit to keep on playing for ten minutes with a sprained ankle!" exclaimed another.

"There's no time for tears in basket-ball," declared Constance, and Rose regarded her approvingly.

The sprain proved a very slight one, and in a few days Constance hardly felt it at all. Miss Wilson had been prevailed upon not to write the news to Pine Tree farm. "You know they might come after me, and I would have to go home and miss the rest of the term," she pleaded, and Miss Wilson promised not to tell of the accident.

But the local paper was represented at the game, and its next issue praised Constance's wonderful self-control, as well as her excellent playing, and this paper found its way to Pine Tree farm, where it created great concern. A telegram to Miss Wilson, however, brought such reassurance that even Grandfather Newman was satisfied, and re-read the account of the game with great satisfaction.

"Self-control, eh! Judgment, um!" he repeated to himself with a pleased chuckle. "I guess our 'Peter' is learning other things than what she reads in books. Eunice," and he turned a smiling face toward his wife, "I think that idea of ours to send Constance to Miss Wilson's school was a mighty good idea. I

believe it is going to make a fine woman of her," he continued.

Grandmother nodded. "Yes, Jabez," she responded. "I never believed in spoiling children. We trained Constance very carefully, you know, and I'm glad to see that she is appreciated, even if it's in a game."

Grandfather chuckled happily. "I wish I could have seen that game," he said. "I guess I'll keep this piece in the paper," and the article referring to Constance was cut out and put carefully away in the tall secretary.

CHAPTER XIII

THE END OF THE TERM

As Constance limped to school or about the grounds she found that she was the object of admiring attention. The younger girls pointed her out to their friends as "the girl who won the basket-ball game"; and would then tell about the twisted ankle and Constance's wonderful grit. To walk with Constance became as great a favor as to be noticed by Rose Mason, and Rose realized it without the slightest ill-feeling. She and Constance were becoming the best of friends, and the influence of the older girl was having a most beneficial result on Sister's way of looking at things.

"Less than a month and we'll be starting for home for Christmas," declared Constance one evening as she and Rose sat together in the latter's room.

"You will," responded Rose; "but I stay at school right along. You know I haven't any mother or father, or anybody except the old lady who is my guardian, and she never wants me; so I stay with Miss Wilson, and I always have a lovely time."

"Do you stay here summers?" questioned Constance.

"Oh, yes. This is more like home than any place to me," replied Rose soberly.

"But where will you go when school is over?" went on Constance.

Rose smiled a little at her friend's anxious face. "I am going to stay with Miss Wilson all next summer," she replied; "and in the fall I am going to Normal School. You see my father did not leave very much money, and by the time my education is finished it will be about all gone, so I am to take the Normal training and teach."

While Rose was talking Constance resolved to herself that her friend should spend the next summer at Pine Tree farm. She knew they would all love to have her. And what good times Rose could have with the pony, and going on all the picnics and everything! She was silent so long that Rose began to laugh.

"I suppose you are being sorry for me," she said; "and that's the last thing to be. You see it isn't as if I knew anything about a home, for both my father and mother died when I was a tiny girl, and I was passed about from one school to another until I came

here. And I've been just as happy as any girl. As soon as I get to be a teacher I shall plan and save my money and start a school of my own just like this one."

"Perhaps you will come back and teach here," suggested Sister.

"Miss Wilson says I can," responded Rose.

After this talk Constance grew more attached to Rose. She was sure that Rose was the most wonderful girl in the world, and resolved to try and be more like her. She noticed how patient and kind she was with the younger pupils; always ready to walk with the little girls, and often appealed to to mend a torn skirt or bind up a cut finger.

"I guess my mother and father would be pleased to have me come home just like Rose," she thought.

The "J. F. F." Club were making great plans for an entertainment to be given for the teachers and pupils of the school. A play had been decided upon. It was an original play by Myrtle Green, and the girls were all sure that it was a wonderful production.

The opening scene was to represent a city drawing-room, where a lady was to be seen reading a letter. She exclaims in apparent disgust that "Cousin Jane is most unreasonable to expect me to go into the country in

the winter." Just then her two daughters enter, one of them a fashionable young lady who declares that "if Cousin Jane is ill let her get some one to take care of her." The other daughter proves the heroine of the play. She insists upon going into the country and caring for Cousin Jane.

The second act showed the farmhouse, the sick cousin, a farm boy (Myrtle herself made an excellent farm boy) and the cousin from the city, who takes such good care of the invalid that she is speedily restored to health, and gives a party where the guests all dance the Virginia Reel.

The last act shows that country cousins are well worth restoring to life and health, for Cousin Jane insists upon taking her unselfish young cousin on a trip abroad; and the selfish mother and sister are left at home lamenting their own short-sightedness.

"Myrtle Green is a perfect genius," declared a member of the club after reading the play, and the other members agreed with her.

"I don't suppose many schools are lucky enough to have so many remarkable girls as we have here," declared another. "Of course Rose Mason is perfectly fine every way, and look at Constance Newman, there are not many girls with her courage, and now Myrtle

Green! I think it's great luck to go to school with such girls," and the others listened approvingly and agreed.

The play was to be given on the night that the school term closed. The next day all the pupils but Rose Mason would start for their holiday visits.

As the term drew near its close Constance began to wonder what the "surprise" would be, of which Miss Wilson had spoken to her before Lamb went home. She knew that her father was to come after her, and she could not imagine what form the surprise would take; but there were so many rehearsals for Myrtle's play beside skating parties on the lake, that gradually she gave up trying to solve the question. Although Miss Wilson did not think it best for Constance to join in the games on the ice, thinking her ankle might be weakened, still Constance found great pleasure in watching the others, in tending the bonfires on the point, and adjusting the straps of those who could skate; and the days went very quickly and pleasantly.

The last day of the term arrived and with it came Mr. Henry Newman; and Constance's first word, after her warm welcome, was to tell him about Rose Mason. "And, father," she exclaimed, "I thought at first that I wanted to ask her to come to Pine Tree farm next

summer ; and I do now, but I want her to go home with us to-morrow. Will you ask her, father ? Just think, she hasn't anybody ! ”

But it did not need any persuasion to influence Mr. Newman. “ Of course we will ask her, that is if your mother and grandmother say so.”

“ But, father, there isn't time to ask them ; we go to-morrow.”

“ So we do ! ” replied Mr. Newman, and Constance wondered a little at her father's forgetting such a thing. “ Well, you introduce me to this wonderful Rose and I will tell her that we want her to be all ready to go home with us.”

At first Rose declared that she could not go ; but when Miss Wilson gave her consent, and Constance was ready to cry at her refusal, she said that she would go, and her eyes brightened and her cheeks flushed happily at the unexpected pleasure in store for her.

Constance did not see her father after supper until, as the fashionable and selfish lady, she looked down at the audience from the platform in the recitation room where the play was to be given. And then she almost forgot the opening lines, for there, in the very front row of seats, were Grandfather and Grandmother

Newman, and her dear mother and father, and Lamb, actually Lamb! It was hard work not to jump off the stage and rush to greet them, but there was a warning word from Rose, and with a radiant smile, which was reflected from five happy faces in the front row, the fashionable lady began her declaration that she would not go into the country.

Grandfather Newman could hardly wait for the play to end; but Lamb was the first one to reach Constance, as she was allowed not only to go behind the curtain, but was invited to "Cousin Jane's" party, and went through the Virginia Reel with her delighted schoolmates.

The elder Newmans had been much interested in Rose's story, and Grandmother Newman said that she was sure Miss Abitha would think of all sorts of delightful plans to make Rose's visit enjoyable.

"She's a dear girl, I can see that," she told grandfather.

"A good deal like our 'Peter,'" responded Grandfather Newman thoughtfully. "I notice they both have the same ways. I guess Miss Wilson's idea of giving our girl a surprise by asking us all here worked pretty well."

But Lamb was doubtless the happiest one of the

party, for the girls were all so glad to see her and, now that her wrist was well, she could join in all the plans for the next term, for she would return with Constance.

A telegram had been sent to Miss Abitha, and when the happy party reached Pine Tree farm on Christmas eve everything was ready for the expected guest.

There were lights in all the windows; Shep was jumping about on the porch and the two cats were close inside the hall door to claim their share of attention.

"This is the best supper that ever was," declared Constance as they all gathered around the table; and when each girl found a round cake with her own name on top in pink sugar letters Lamb said that Miss Abitha was the best cook that ever was.

"Aren't you going to eat your cake, my dear?" asked Mrs. Newman, noticing that Rose was looking at her own name admiringly, while Sister and Lamb devoured theirs.

"I thought I'd like to keep it, if you don't mind," responded the girl. "You see it is the first cake that was ever made especially for me, and, somehow, I don't like to eat it."

Grandmother and young Mrs. Newman exchanged an understanding look, and grandmother said, "Well,

it shan't be the last one; for every time you come to Pine Tree farm, and I hope you will come often, I shall make you a cake myself."

"Constance," said Rose as they went up-stairs that night, "it was a lucky day for me when you came to Miss Wilson's school."

"And for me, too," responded Constance, looking at Rose affectionately.

"Lamb," she said to her sister later on when they were in their own room, "I can't believe that we were ever so foolish as to run off to that horrid old school-house. Just think, if our mother hadn't decided to send us to school this year we never would have known Rose Mason."

"I guess mothers always know best," replied Lamb; "anyway I shan't ever run away again. Does Rose Mason know about that, Sister?"

"No," said Sister slowly; "and I'm almost ashamed to tell her, but perhaps I ought to."

"Yes," said Lamb; "I guess if she is coming here often she ought to know all about us."

"Oh, dear," sighed Constance, "I guess it will be a lesson to us, Lamb. I can't bear to tell Rose; she always does things just right, and perhaps she won't like me when she hears about it."

"Well," insisted Lamb, "you ought to tell her just the same," and Constance promised that she would.

Grandfather took them all for a sleigh-ride the next morning, and stopped at Jimmie's "farm" to point out where the lynx had been concealed, and where Jimmie had slain it.

"That took courage," declared grandfather; "more courage than it took for Lamb and Peter to stay all night in the old schoolhouse," and then grandfather told Rose that the girls had not wanted to go to school, and all about their running away.

Both Sister and Lamb felt very uncomfortable as they listened. But Rose seemed to understand all about it.

"I guess I should have felt just that way if I had a home like Pine Tree farm, and so many people to care about me," she said.

"I guess you would," said grandfather, smiling at her approvingly. "I said that you and Peter were a good deal alike."

"Isn't it lovely that grandfather told her and that she don't care?" Lamb whispered to her sister, and Constance nodded happily.

CHAPTER XIV

A SKATING CARNIVAL

"Look at the lake!" exclaimed Lamb, as the girls drove up through the grounds on their return from their visit to Pine Tree farm.

"We will have fine skating now, and I shall have a chance to use the skates your grandmother gave me," responded Rose.

"Isn't it lovely that you are to go back to Pine Tree farm with us next summer," said Lamb, giving the elder girl's arm an affectionate squeeze. "I guess they all liked you just as well as they do us."

Rose laughed at her little friend's enthusiasm. "I am glad if they'll like me quarter as well," she replied; "but you will have to start in on your skating club now, Eunice."

But Lamb shook her head.

"I guess I've been away too long," she declared. "I don't believe the girls would want me to be president now; and that's all I wanted to have a club for so as to be president of something."

This statement made both Constance and Rose

laugh heartily, and when Miss Wilson came out on the porch to welcome them she was sure that she had never seen three happier girls than those just returned from Pine Tree farm.

Myrtle Green came rushing up to their room to hear all about their good times, and to tell of her own happy holidays.

"Oh, girls!" she exclaimed. "What do you suppose my father is going to do? He is going to have 'Cousin Jane,' my play, you know, printed. Honest he is. It makes a little sliver of a book; but father is so proud of it that he wants to give copies of it to everybody. And he's going to send a copy to every girl in the school."

"That will be fine," responded Constance heartily.

"And he is going to have Miss Wilson's picture in it and mine," concluded Myrtle a little anxiously. "You don't suppose the girls will think that is silly, do you?"

"No, indeed!" declared Constance. "I think it was lovely in him to think of it."

"Have you heard of Miss Wilson's surprise for us?" Myrtle continued, having satisfied herself as to her friend's opinion.

"Oh, what is it?" asked Lamb eagerly.

"It's something for to-morrow night," exclaimed Myrtle; "and we all think it's something to do with a skating party. If it is we will all know by to-morrow morning. You know she gives us all some kind of a good time as soon as we get back from the Christmas vacation."

Constance gave a little sigh. "I was thinking," she explained, in answer to Myrtle's look of surprise, "how lucky it was that Lamb and I came to this school. Just think of all the good times we would have missed if we had stayed at home."

"Why, of course it was lucky!" exclaimed Myrtle. "There isn't a nicer school anywhere."

"I don't believe there is one as good," declared Constance loyally.

When the girls assembled in the dining-room for supper that night each one found a large square envelope beside her plate. Across the top of each envelope were painted tiny figures in bright skating costumes.

"It's our invitations," announced Myrtle; and there was an immediate rustle of paper, as the girls all opened their envelopes and each took out her card of invitation.

Then there were many exclamations of admiration and pleasure. The cards read :

" You are invited to take part in a skating carnival to be held on Forest Lake to-morrow evening. Guests will please not go to the pond during the afternoon ; and will gather in the school library at exactly a quarter before seven, where they will be met and escorted to the lake."

There was great excitement that evening wondering what the surprise would be, and why Miss Wilson should ask them not to go near the lake during the day.

" I suppose we could go down almost to the lake and see if anything was being done there," ventured one of the younger girls to Lamb.

" Of course we couldn't !" answered Lamb.

" Well, Miss Wilson didn't tell us not to," persisted the girl.

" She asked us not to, didn't she ?" said Lamb ; " and on an invitation, too ; and I guess there isn't a girl that goes to school here who would be mean enough to try to find out after that," and Lamb looked at her companion so indignantly that the little girl promptly decided that she would not talk to " that Eunice Newman " any more.

Rose Mason, Myrtle Green and Constance Newman were excused from afternoon recitations on the day of the carnival, and the other pupils knew that these girls had been selected to assist the teachers.

"There's going to be things to eat," announced Lamb, as she saw Sister a moment just before supper.

"Yes," said Constance; "I can tell you as much as that, there's going to be a treat."

At exactly a quarter before seven the guests were all waiting in the school library. They had been assembled but a moment when there sounded a long musical note from a cornet and then came the rat tat-tat of a drum, followed by the strains of Washington's March, and the door opened and four figures walked in. The girls quickly recognized Miss Wilson, Rose Mason, Myrtle Green, and Constance Newman, although they were all dressed in tall fur caps, short red blanket skirts, with long belted blouses of red, and high fur-topped boots. Each one carried a lantern. They directed the girls to form into four divisions, and with a guide at the head of each division, filed out of the building. When they reached the steps there stood the village band, and at a signal from Miss Wilson they struck up a lively quickstep and marched briskly down the road to the pond.

"Isn't it lovely?" whispered Lamb to the girl nearest her. And indeed it was a scene that the girls would long remember. The clear, crisp air, the shining stars and the gay music. As they neared the lake they all cried out in delight. Two big bonfires were blazing near the shore and lighting up all that side of the pond, and right between the two stood what looked like a huge bouquet of apple-blossoms, but, as the girls drew nearer they could see that it was a sort of arbor, or summer-house, and completely covered with branches which surely seemed loaded with blossoms.

"They are paper flowers," declared one of the girls; and so they were, but made with so much skill that it seemed as if spring had showered down her choicest blooms for the January ice carnival.

The other teachers were awaiting them, and assisted Miss Wilson in forming the girls into quadrilles on the ice, while the band standing near one of the bonfires furnished the music.

Just as some of the skaters were beginning to get a little tired they were startled and interested to see two big fires suddenly blaze up on the opposite side of the pond, and to see ten or a dozen girls come dashing out on to the lake from that side. When these new-

comers had reached the centre of the lake they formed in line and began singing :

“There is a teacher in our town, in our town,
And great, and great is her renown, her renown.
And listen while we tell her name, known to fame !
Hear her name, known to fame !
Miss Wilson !”

This was followed by a rousing cheer.

“It’s the high school girls from the village,” exclaimed Rose Mason. “Hurry up, girls, we must cheer them back !” and, darting out on the ice closely followed by Constance and Myrtle and the older girls, Rose called out, “Three cheers and a welcome for the high school girls,” which was given with a will.

Then the guests, whom Miss Wilson had invited several days earlier, joined in with Miss Wilson’s girls in showing off their skill on skates. A long call from the cornet was the signal, however, for them to form in line and march toward the house. The high school girls were given the lead, and were escorted by the fur clad guides.

When they had taken off their warm coats and mittens they were called into the dining-room. The small tables had been taken out and two long tables,

ornamented with flowers, had been spread. As soon as the girls were seated they were served to hot oyster stew.

The big hall clock struck ten when the high school girls were warmly wrapped up for their ride to the village. As the big sleigh drove down the avenue they sent back a ringing cheer for "Miss Wilson's School," which was cordially responded to by three cheers for "the high school girls." And then they hurried off to their rooms.

"It was as good as one of Miss Abitha's surprises," declared Lamb, as the two sisters prepared for bed.

"Yes, it was," assented Constance, and they both felt that this was the highest possible praise.

CHAPTER XV

LOST ON THE RIVER

As the winter advanced Mr. Newman decided that Jimmie Woodyear had better remain at the farm nights, instead of going home as had been his custom. There was not much for the boy to do except keep a good supply of fire-wood ready, and take care of Jet, so he found frequent opportunities of snowshoeing across the fields to see his mother.

"I think, Jimmie, that you and I ought to do some studying this winter," said Miss Abitha one morning when the boy came into her house on an errand ; "look at all the time we have!"

"I guess you don't waste much time, Miss Abitha," responded the boy.

"I don't know about that," declared Miss Abitha with a laugh. "When I get a letter from Constance and see all the different things she is learning, and hear all about the gymnasium practice, and club meetings, I begin to think that everybody who doesn't go to school is wasting his time."

"I guess you don't have to go to school to learn how to farm," said Jimmie.

Miss Abitha looked at him and shook her head. "Why, Jimmie!" she exclaimed, "a farmer has to know everything, root and branch. And you and I must begin right away." So it was decided that Jimmie was to recite to Miss Abitha every day.

The evenings no longer seemed dull and tiresome to the boy, for Miss Abitha soon interested him in mathematics and gave him fascinating problems to work out. She told him about the Agricultural College, and Jimmie resolved to himself that some day he would go and have at least one term's instruction.

With the price of the lynx's skin, and what little he could save from his small earnings Jimmie hoped to purchase two more acres of land the coming year. Then, too, he was counting on a fine crop of potatoes from the land he had already cleared. He felt that in a few years he would own enough land to become a farmer on a small scale, and Mr. Newman encouraged this ambition.

Miss Abitha missed Sister and Lamb, and was very glad to help Jimmie all she could with his lessons. They would also go off on occasional snow-shoe trips; sometimes to the village, and now and then across the fields and down the river a short distance.

It was early in February when Miss Abitha planned

for an excursion after frost-fish. She and Jimmie were to start in the morning so as to reach the river in good season, cut holes through the ice and set their hooks, then snow-shoe down the river a short distance to a small cabin where they would build a fire, eat their luncheon, and be near enough to attend to their fishing.

Jimmie had a good ice chisel, and had brought with him all the necessary materials for frost-fishing. These consisted of two dozen strong fish-hooks, and lines; a piece of pork, which he intended to cut into small bits for bait, and a bunch of strong rods, each one about a yard long. To one end of each of these rods was fastened a small square of red flannel.

As soon as they reached the fishing grounds Jimmie began to cut holes in the ice. These holes were about a foot square and about six feet apart. While he was doing this Miss Abitha went to the cabin and deposited the basket of lunch and started up a fire. When she came back she brought an armful of alder branches, each one having a notch where a limb had been cut off, making each branch look something like a letter Y.

Then Jimmie set these alder branches firmly in the ice, one at each opening. The baited hooks were then

tied to the rods, and, by means of a loosely-tied slip-noose, were secured to the alder stick ; resting across the notch in such a way that the bait was in the water and the red flag at the other end.

"Now," said Jimmie, "when a fish bites up goes the red flag, see ? "

"Yes, indeed !" replied Miss Abitha admiringly. "And all that we have to do is run up and pull out Mr. Frost-fish, and bait our hooks again."

"That's all," answered Jimmie.

"I almost wish that my farm was along a river," he continued. "Then I could go fishing stormy days. And I could build a boat, too."

"You can build the boat just the same," declared Miss Abitha ; "and it will be just as easy to go fishing as if your farm was right here, and a lot more fun."

"Look ! look !" exclaimed Jimmie, for just then three of the red flags bobbed up, and the fishermen hastened to take the fish off the hooks and set new bait. By the time these were attended to several other flags were flying and time passed so quickly that even Jimmie forgot about luncheon.

"It's two o'clock, Jimmie Woodyear," exclaimed Miss Abitha. "I will take some of these fish down to

the cabin and fry them; and when everything is ready I'll call."

"All right," responded Jimmie, and Miss Abitha hurried back to the cabin to find that the fire was all out, and that a family of inquisitive squirrels were making strenuous efforts to get into the lunch basket.

There was plenty of dry wood piled up in a corner of the cabin, and in a short time the fish were ready, the potatoes baked to a turn, and the fragrance of hot coffee filled the cabin.

Then Miss Abitha went to the door and called Jimmie. She had been so busy in preparing the luncheon that she had not thought about the weather, and as she opened the cabin door and looked out she exclaimed in surprise. It was only the middle of the afternoon, but the sun had vanished, and dull gray clouds hung low above the horizon. The trees near the cabin lashed themselves against each other as the wind swept up from the river, and spits of snow dashed in Miss Abitha's face.

Jimmie answered her call promptly.

"We must start for home the minute we finish our lunch," said Miss Abitha, "for it looks as if we were going to have a regular blizzard."

"The fish are biting finely," said Jimmie regretfully.
"I've got forty good ones now."

"That's enough to carry," said Miss Abitha.

By the time they had finished their luncheon, put out the fire, and were ready to start the storm had begun in good earnest. Not only did the snow come so thick and fast that they could see but a short distance ahead, but a cold wind swept fiercely across the river.

"I've got to get those fish, and my hooks," said Jimmie, as they started up the river toward home.

"I don't know as it will be best, Jimmie, to keep as far out from shore as that," responded Miss Abitha. "If you should slip or get your foot into one of those holes you might perish before I could find you. Don't you think you had better give up the fish than take that risk?"

But Jimmie was sure that he could easily get the string of fish, and his hooks, and Miss Abitha consented.

"I will keep straight up toward the point," she said, "and wait for you there," and Jimmie struck off toward the middle of the river and was hid by the blinding snow, that now seemed to be coming in sheets.

Miss Abitha had gone but a short distance when she realized that, in spite of the active exercise, she was becoming chilled through. Her fingers ached with the cold, and as the snow struck her face it stung like tiny sparks of fire. They were at least three miles from Pine Tree farm, and the journey hardly begun. Miss Abitha remembered that their way led across several bleak fields before reaching the road, and blamed herself that she had not taken notice of the weather conditions earlier in the day.

Just then she heard a faint call, and stopped to listen. It was surely some one calling her name, and came from the direction Jimmie had taken.

Miss Abitha did not hesitate a moment but struck boldly out toward the fishing ground calling out, "Jimmie!" as she went.

The boy's voice answered her, and in spite of the storm, she made her way swiftly toward the sound.

"Look out, Miss Abitha!" she heard; "keep off to the right, or you'll catch your snow-shoe in one of the holes. That's what I've done."

Jimmie had secured his string of fish, and was groping about for his hooks when a sudden wrench threw him sideways. The point of his snow-shoe had caught in a hole, and although the boy made every

effort to work his foot clear he found it impossible; and then his calls had brought Miss Abitha to the rescue.

"Don't break my snow-shoe or we'll never get home," said the boy, as Miss Abitha with numbed fingers endeavored to set him free. It did not take long to release his foot; and in a few moments Jimmie had rescued the snow-shoe, and, still clinging to the string of fish, was ready to start again.

"It's awful cold," he said as they carefully made their way toward the point. "I began to think I'd freeze before I could get my foot out."

They moved on as rapidly as they could, but both realized that they were making slow progress. It was rapidly growing dark, and a new fear took possession of Miss Abitha: what if they should lose their way in crossing those bleak fields, and wander about in the night and storm until utterly exhausted.

"Miss Abitha," exclaimed Jimmie suddenly, "the wind has changed or else we are going the wrong way."

Miss Abitha stopped. Jimmie was right. The wind which had swept so strongly against them was now at their back.

"Jimmie," and Miss Abitha's voice sounded rather



"DON'T BE FRIGHTENED," HE SAID

frightened, "we have been going straight down the river ever since I found you."

"Then we must turn back," said Jimmie bravely; but he realized their danger as well as Miss Abitha did. They were lost on the river, without knowing in which direction their course should lie.

Jimmie reached out and grasped Miss Abitha's hand.

"Don't be frightened," he said. "We'll keep right on up to the point, and when we get there we can make a fire. There's trees there and I've got matches."

At Pine Tree farm the coming of the storm had been watched with but little anxiety.

"Abitha will start in good season," said Grandfather Newman; "we needn't worry." But as the storm grew worse Mr. Eben Bean and Mr. Henry Newman decided to drive down toward the river.

"It will be hard work facing this wind," declared Mr. Bean. "And I reckon they will be glad of a ride home." So they started at about the time when Miss Abitha had helped Jimmie out of the fishing hole. As they had to follow the road it took them some time to reach the river.

"I'm afraid they have snow-shoed across the fields," said Mr. Newman as they came out on the wooded point. "We ought to have met them before this."

While he was speaking Mr. Bean sprang from the sleigh.

"We must try to start some sort of a bonfire here," he exclaimed. "They may be on the river now, not knowing what direction to take."

The anxiety of Mr. Bean made Henry Newman hasten to join him, and the two men worked with a will, breaking off such branches as they could reach and heaping them about a white birch-tree. It was hard work, but after a while a blaze was started, and shielded and encouraged the fire soon blazed up brightly and sent shadowy gleams of light out across the river.

It was Jimmie who first noticed the blaze, and he called out at the top of his voice, "Help! Help!" Miss Abitha's voice echoed his.

"Hear that!" said Mr. Bean. "They are on the river, and not a great way off either," and before Mr. Newman could prevent him the old man had dashed through the snow in the direction of the voices.

Mr. Newman replenished and guarded the fire, and it was not long before Mr. Bean, Miss Abitha and Jimmie, the latter still clinging to his string of fish, were warming themselves before it. Then the fisher-

men were warmly wrapped in the fur robes, and the horses started for home at their best pace.

"I don't know as I shall ever get you brought up, Abitha," declared her father as he drew the furs more closely about her. "You're the most troublesome child I ever had."

CHAPTER XVI

MYRTLE GREEN'S SURPRISE

"I WISH you had written a play, Sister, the way Myrtle Green did," Lamb announced one morning, as the two sisters walked across to the school building.

"What for?" asked Constance.

"Well, because mother and everybody at Pine Tree farm would have been so pleased about it, and because grandfather would have had it printed and had your picture in it just the way Myrtle Green's father did."

"I shouldn't know what to write about," declared Constance, but the more she thought about it the more desirous she became of being the author for the next "J. F. F." Club entertainment.

"Rose," she said one day when the two friends were in the library together, "you remember what grandfather told us about Jimmie Woodyear killing the lynx?"

"Why, yes, of course!" responded Rose.

"And I read you Miss Abitha's letter about their

adventure on the river. Now," continued Constance, "I want to ask you something very important."

Rose nodded smilingly. "Go ahead," she replied.

"Well," said Constance slowly, "I want to ask you if you think I could write a play for the 'J. F. F.' Club about Jimmie and Miss Abitha?"

"Of course you could!" responded Rose enthusiastically. "It will be just the thing. I can be Miss Abitha and you can be Jimmie. You can have the last scene your father and Mr. Bean rescuing us from the storm. It will be great. But you will have to begin right away. I don't suppose you would want me to help you write it?" concluded Rose.

"Oh, Rose! Would you? That would be lovely," exclaimed Constance, and that very morning the Easter entertainment of the "J. F. F.'s" was decided upon. It was to be a play in three acts by Miss Rose Mason and Constance Newman, entitled "Saved from the Storm." The girls became much interested in it. They decided that the first act should represent the kitchen of a farmhouse, and an anxious mother awaiting the return of her brave son who had gone in pursuit of a lynx which had been destroying their chickens. While she is telling of her anxiety as to her son's safety the door opens, and the brave boy appears, with his gun in

one hand and dragging the dead lynx with the other.

"What will we have for a lynx?" exclaimed Constance, anxiously, when this point was reached.

"Oh, we will have to make one," replied Rose. "We can cut a great big cat-shaped thing out of black cambric and stuff it with excelsior so it will look like some kind of a strange animal."

"You think of everything, Rose," declared Constance admiringly.

The second act was to represent the mother receiving word that a sister was ill, and deciding that she must cross the river to visit her. The boy is to accompany her, so they bid the other members of the family farewell and start out.

The third and final act was to represent a snow-storm, the mother and son nearly overcome by cold, and rescued by the father and a neighbor.

The play was submitted for Miss Wilson's approval, the actors selected, and the meetings of the "J. F. F." were now given over to rehearsals of "Saved from the Storm." Lamb was to be the little daughter of the family, and was to appear in every act.

"I guess you are the smartest girl in this school, Sister," she declared. "You won the basket-ball

game, Rose Mason picked you out for her friend, and now you have written a play."

"I'm not half so smart as Rose," responded Constance loyally; "and as for writing a play it's Rose who has really planned it all. I only furnished the plot."

"Well, I guess the plot is all there is to any play," said Lamb firmly; "and I guess Miss Abitha and Jimmie will be proud enough when they hear about it."

"Eunice!" exclaimed Constance. "You know Rose is going home with us vacation time."

Lamb nodded.

"Well, I've thought of something we can do as a surprise for the Pine Tree farm people. You know what a lovely big shed grandfather has; why can't we get Jimmie to build a little platform in one end of it, and put in chairs, and then we will give 'Saved from the Storm.' Jimmie and Miss Abitha can take part, and Mary Woodyear, too, and we will ask the Woodyear family to all come and see it. I know grandfather would like it."

"Of course he would," agreed Lamb; "and Mary Woodyear would think it was lovely to be in a real play. Oh, Sister, won't you be glad when it is really time to go home for all summer?"

Constance nodded. "Yes, I will," she replied; "and when I do get home, Eunice, I am going to tell mother how sorry I am that we ran off to that old schoolhouse. I wanted to tell her at Christmas time, but I got so ashamed whenever I thought about it that I couldn't."

"I'll tell her, too," said Lamb; "but, Sister, how were we to know that school would be like this?"

"We ought to have known that our mother and father knew, if we didn't," replied Constance firmly.

"I've learned so many things," said Lamb, with a little sigh. "I thought I could remember and tell them all to grandmother, but I guess I shall have to leave out some."

As the time for the Easter entertainment drew near Constance noticed a change in Myrtle Green's manner. Myrtle had always been so ready to join in all the plans for good times, and had often explained the ways of the school to Constance, and had been kind to Lamb; but gradually she began to avoid them both and at last hardly spoke to them.

"I don't know what is the matter," Constance told Rose Mason; "but Myrtle acts as if she couldn't bear to see me around."

"She will have to tell the 'J. F. F.'s' about it,"

responded Rose. "Don't you remember that one of our by-laws is that every member of the club must be loyal to every other member? She will have to give some good reason to the club for not speaking to you, or else be fined."

"Oh, dear," wailed Constance; "that will make her really hate me, and I don't believe she does now; she's only cross about something."

"Do you want to ask her about it?" suggested Rose.

Constance shook her head. "I know she wouldn't tell me," she answered; "and I don't believe she would listen to me long enough for me to ask her."

"I don't want to interfere," said Rose; "but I think I know what the trouble is. It's on account of our play."

"Why, Myrtle wrote a play herself!" exclaimed Constance in surprise.

Rose nodded. "Yes," she responded; "that's it. You see her play was really so good, and her father was so pleased with it, and we all had our parts so well that Myrtle thought we would want to give it again at Easter, and perhaps ask the high school girls to come. I heard one of the girls say that Myrtle's father and mother were coming at Easter time because they wanted to see the play."

"She's a selfish thing!" exclaimed Constance.
"And if she don't want to speak to me she needn't; I
guess she can't write all the plays."

Rose looked rather sober, but she made no reply for a moment, then she said slowly, "Perhaps it does seem selfish in Myrtle, but I have a plan that would make everything all right."

"What is it?" asked Constance eagerly.

When Rose finished explaining the plan Constance's face wore a puzzled and unhappy look.

"It seems to me, Rose, that you like Myrtle the best," she said slowly, and then as she looked into her friend's face she exclaimed, "oh, I don't mean that, dear Rose, but I don't believe there ever was another girl in the whole world as good as you are, and if you think that is the way to do, why I'll do it."

"I knew you would want to do the right thing," said Rose.

"I think this is something more than just 'right,'" declared Constance with a little laugh. "I think it's something fine."

"All the better," responded Rose, "it isn't every day we get a chance to do really fine things, is it?"

"And it was such a job to stuff that old lynx," said Constance.

Rose laughed. "We will have to see the girls and tell them about the change," she said, "and caution them not to let Myrtle guess a word about it; and we had better tell Miss Wilson right away, so that she can send word to Myrtle's father to be sure and be here for the Easter entertainment."

"Won't Myrtle be surprised," exclaimed Constance, "when the curtain goes up on the first act of 'Cousin Jane' instead of 'Saved From the Storm'!" For Rose's plan was to give up their own play and give Myrtle's instead, and, although Constance agreed to it, she felt that it was very unselfish.

Miss Wilson listened to the girls' story with much interest. She knew of Myrtle's disappointment, and had noticed her manner toward Constance but had not thought it best to interfere.

"I think I have great reason to be proud of you both," she said; "and I should never have suggested such an act of pure unselfishness. It is the very thing to do, but I am afraid poor Myrtle will feel very much ashamed of herself."

That very night a letter was sent to Pine Tree farm telling Constance's mother the whole story, and adding many words of praise as to the decision that Rose and Constance had made.

Grandfather Newman read the letter approvingly. "I guess that's a pretty good school," he announced as he finished the letter. "Miss Wilson seems to appreciate our 'Peter.'"

As for Myrtle it seemed to her as if all the girls in the school were in league against her. There were so many private rehearsals of the Easter entertainment. Then, too, she heard that the high school girls had been invited to be present, and she knew how disappointed her father and mother would be to have some other play than "Cousin Jane" given. She began to avoid her schoolmates, to go off on solitary walks, and to think of herself as a very much abused person.

It had been decided that Lamb should take Myrtle's part in the play, and the little girl felt very pleased and important over the fact.

At last the night of the entertainment came. Mr. and Mrs. Green had arrived, and Myrtle had brightened a little in the pleasure of seeing them, but she looked forward to an unhappy evening. She saw the high school girls arrive, and noticed all the bustle and excitement of the "J. F. F.'s," and felt shut out from all the old pleasures and good times.

"They are all hateful and selfish," she thought to herself. "Even Rose Mason and Constance, who pre-

tended to like me, are so stuck-up over their own play that they have forgotten all about mine," and she entered the hall with a very bitter spirit toward her friends.

"Well! Well!" exclaimed Mr. Green, as he looked up and saw "Cousin Jane," in big letters of evergreen on the walls of the hall, "what does that mean?"

"I don't know," murmured Myrtle, but some way the sight of the name of her play comforted her; it showed that some of the girls remembered, she thought. Rose and Constance had worked all the afternoon to put up the letters, but Myrtle was to find that out later on.

The room filled rapidly. Miss Wilson sat beside Mr. and Mrs. Green, and when the curtain went up she watched Myrtle closely.

"My play!" gasped the little girl.

At the end there was a cry of "Author! Author!" and it was a trembling and red-eyed girl who, led by Rose Mason, appeared on the little stage and made her best bow. For Myrtle had had time to think, and she was not very proud of herself. She realized that Rose and Constance had been willing to give up the pleasure of seeing their own play performed, to relinquish all the results of their hard work, rather than have

Myrtle unhappy and disappointed ; and it seemed to her they must despise any girl as small-minded and selfish as she felt herself to be.

Constance and Rose both hurried toward Myrtle as soon as the entertainment was over.

"Wern't you surprised, Myrtle ?" exclaimed Constance.

"Oh, Constance, I have acted so meanly to you," sobbed Myrtle ; "I should think you and Rose would hate me."

"Well, we don't," interrupted Rose. "You are a 'J. F. F.' you know, Myrtle, and that's a tie that binds," and Myrtle was soon persuaded to wipe her eyes and enjoy all the pleasant things that their guests had to say about "Cousin Jane."

"Myrtle," whispered Lamb later on that evening, "it was lovely to have your play, and when we get to Pine Tree farm why then we can have 'Saved From the Storm.'"

"I wish I could see it," responded Myrtle ; "I'm sure it is better than mine."

"Well," said Lamb thoughtfully, "I s'pose it is, but yours is real good, Myrtle."

CHAPTER XVII

AN OVERTURNED BOAT

"OH, girls!" exclaimed Myrtle one day toward the last of April, as she overtook Constance and Rose on their way to the lake, "what do you suppose Miss Wilson is going to do?" and without waiting for their answer she continued rapidly, "she is going to let us have our boat picnic next Saturday. The boats are being looked over and put in order now."

"What is a 'boat picnic'?" questioned Constance.

"You weren't here last spring, so this will be something new," responded Rose. "You tell her what a boat picnic is, Myrtle."

"It's the nicest time of the whole year," declared Myrtle, enthusiastically. "In the first place, we all have to get up early enough to see the sun rise."

"I don't call that a good time," interrupted Constance laughingly, but Myrtle continued, "We don't see it rise from our rooms, we have to be up and dressed and down at the boat landing, and the girls that miss the sunrise miss the picnic."

"Yes," confirmed Rose, "and they miss the very

best breakfast of the year, too ; for when we get back to the house after the sunrise there is always a surprise for breakfast ; something that we are sure to like. Sometimes it is broiled chicken, and sometimes it is buckwheat cakes and maple syrup, but it's always something good."

"And as soon as breakfast is over," went on Myrtle, "we all march back to the lake and get in the boats and the picnic begins. Wouldn't you rather wait until Saturday, Constance, and see what it is yourself, instead of having us tell you about it ? "

"Why, I don't know," answered Constance ; "perhaps it will be more fun." So the description of the boat picnic was not finished, and Constance looked forward eagerly to Saturday. She talked it over with Lamb and they both wondered if it would be at all like Miss Abitha's picnics.

Early Saturday morning Sister was awake, and by various shakes and calls aroused Lamb to the importance of getting up.

"Nobody has called us," objected Lamb sleepily.

"And nobody will," replied Constance. "This is the one morning in the year when they don't ring a bell ; if the girls don't care enough about the fun to get up, why then they miss it," and Constance ener-

getically began her morning toilet, quickly followed by Lamb.

"I wish I could row," said Constance. "I heard Rose say that a boat race was always part of the picnic."

"You can learn," replied Lamb; "and then next year your boat will win the race."

Constance laughed. "I can't win everything," she responded.

"Oh, yes, you can," declared Lamb confidently. "Myrtle Green says that you have more brains than any girl in school."

"It isn't brains that wins a boat race," said Constance; "it's practice and muscle."

"Well, I guess it means just the same," decided Lamb.

Every girl in school was at the boat landing in time to see the sun rise, and they all had excellent appetites for the tempting breakfast which was ready for them on their return to the house. This morning it was broiled trout, the first of the season, and Constance decided they were well worth getting up for.

The three boats were drawn up at the landing. Miss Wilson was to steer one boat, and the two other boats were each in charge of a teacher. Constance

and Lamb were both to go in Miss Wilson's boat, which was rowed by Myrtle Green, Rose Mason, and two of the older girls.

The teachers and oarsmen were all dressed in their gymnasium suits, and each girl handled her oar in a very skilful manner. Miss Wilson's boat took the lead, heading directly up the lake, and followed by the two other boats.

"I believe that we are headed for Arbutus point," declared Myrtle, and Miss Wilson nodded in assent.

It was the first time that Constance and Lamb had been on the lake and they looked about in delight. The morning was soft and warm, and the sky blue and without a cloud. On one side of the lake was a beautiful grove of pine trees, and on the other side smooth fields sloped down to the water. There was a pleasant fragrance of spring in the air, and the girls called back and forth from one boat to another. Far up the lake Constance could see the point of land, known as Arbutus point, from the quantity of that beautiful flower which blossomed there every spring.

In less than an hour they had reached the point, landed their lunch baskets and wraps and were ready for the first pleasure of the day. Constance and Lamb were surprised to see Myrtle and Rose pre-

paring to climb two tall trees that stood in a little opening near the lake.

"We put up the swing," Rose explained, and the girls watched their two schoolmates admiringly as they went up from limb to limb, sure-footed and unafraid, and made fast the strong ropes for the swing.

While they were doing this Miss Wilson and the two teachers were looking over a number of fishing-rods, and selecting hooks and bait. Arbutus Creek, which emptied into the lake near the point, was a well-stocked trout stream, and the teachers, accompanied by one or two girls, started off promising to secure enough fish for dinner.

This left the greater number of the girls on the point with perfect freedom to do exactly as they pleased. Several strolled off through the beautiful woods, the swing was in constant demand, and Myrtle, Rose and Constance walked along the sandy beach.

About two hundred yards from the point a large log of wood had been anchored.

Myrtle pointed it out to Constance. "That is for the race," she explained. We row out to that log, round it and back to the point, and the boat that wins gets a prize. Last year the prize was a box of candy

for each of the winners. Of course we don't know what it will be this year."

"I wish I could row," said Constance.

"Why don't you?" responded Myrtle. "Come on, now is a good time to begin; I'll show you how."

Rose decided to continue her walk alone, but Myrtle and Constance returned to where the boats were fastened. Myrtle pushed off the smaller of the three boats, Constance sprang in, took her seat, and was ready for her first lesson in seamanship.

"You want to hold your oar this way," directed Myrtle. "Don't dip it down too deep or you'll 'catch a crab'; just put it down in the water, lift it up so," and Myrtle illustrated how simple an art it was to use an oar correctly.

"What makes the boat go so one-sided?" asked Constance after a few uneven strokes.

"It's because I row so much stronger than you do," explained Myrtle. "You see I pull you right around."

At this Constance made a mighty effort to put more force into her stroke, and bent so far back that she lost her balance and went over backward into the bottom of the boat. Her grasp on the oar gave way, and off went the oar into the water.

Myrtle's stroke sent the boat round in a half-circle before she realized her friend's predicament.

"Oh, Myrtle! I can't get up," wailed Constance. "I'm all wedged in."

"I'll help you," announced Myrtle, and pulling her oar in to what she believed a safe position, she crawled over the seat, took a firm hold of Constance's hands and pulled vigorously.

Constance struggled to help herself, and both the girls forgot the swaying boat, and the many times they had been cautioned to be as careful as possible in changing seats. The boat rocked beneath them, and as Constance lurched toward Myrtle both the girls bent too much toward the right and in an instant were in the water.

The boat quickly righted itself, and Constance was near enough to get a grasp on the side. She held on tightly, and looked for Myrtle who came spluttering noisily up on the farther side of the boat. "I'm all right," Myrtle called out. "I can swim. I'll be in the boat in a minute; you hold on."

Rose had noticed that there was some trouble in the boat, and had run swiftly to the landing, pushed off a boat, and rowed rapidly toward her friends. It was fortunate that she had acted so quickly, for Con-

stance had become frightened and in struggling to get into the boat had upset it and was now making vain efforts to clamber up on its slippery bottom. Myrtle was swimming toward her, but did not know how to be of help.

"Constance," called Rose, "just keep your hands on the boat, and keep perfectly still," and at the sound of her friend's quiet voice Constance became quiet.

Rose rowed up beside the overturned boat and, explaining to Constance the necessity of being as careful as possible, helped her into her own boat.

"Now, Myrtle," she called, "can't we manage to get that boat righted and tow it ashore?"

"Of course we can," declared Myrtle, and the wisdom of Miss Wilson's practical lessons in swimming, and what to do in similar emergencies, were well proven, for Myrtle and Rose soon righted the overturned boat, rescued the floating oars, and in a short time they were all safely on shore.

"You girls are so wet, you must get out of those dripping clothes," insisted Rose. Fortunately there was an abundance of warm shawls, and they were soon rid of their soaked clothing and warmly wrapped up, while Rose started a fire on the beach and hung their things about it to dry.

The other girls soon gathered about and heard the story of the accident.

"Then Rose Mason really saved your lives!" exclaimed one girl, and although Rose laughed at the idea, the other girls were only too ready to add another heroic quality to their favorite, and insisted upon regarding Rose as the heroine of the day.

When Miss Wilson and her companions returned, with a fine string of trout, they were astonished to find Myrtle and Constance arrayed, Indian fashion, in shawls, and sitting with their bare feet stretched out toward the blazing fire.

They listened to the story of the accident, and praised Myrtle and Constance, as well as Rose, for showing so much self-control and presence of mind.

"I want to learn to swim as soon as I can," announced Constance; "and row, too. Just think, if Myrtle had not known how to swim she might have been drowned."

"You shall learn to swim before vacation time, Constance," replied Miss Wilson; "and to manage a boat, too. Now we must have our lunch as soon as possible."

The trout were cooked on hot, flat rocks over the fire, with tiny strips of pork. A coffee kettle was

suspended over the blaze from a forked stick, and the girls all said that there never was such a good luncheon.

"Oh, Sister," whispered Lamb, as she snuggled close beside Constance, "wasn't it lucky that Rose helped you out? Somehow I'd rather it would be Rose than anybody."

"That's just the way I feel," responded Constance; "and, Eunice, I wish I could do something lovely for Rose. Just think of all the things she has done for me."

"Let's tell grandfather about it," suggested Lamb. "You know, Sister, that he always thinks of the nicest things to do for everybody."

"Yes, he does," agreed Constance.

Directly after lunch Miss Wilson said they must start for home.

"These girls mustn't sit about in shawls any longer," she declared, smiling at Myrtle and Constance; "and I do not dare have them put on their half-dried things," so the picnic came to rather an abrupt ending.

Lamb and Constance sat close together in the boat, and Lamb kept a tight hold of her sister's hand.

"I just love Rose Mason," she declared as they landed; "and I know what I'm going to do, I'm

going to give her my half of our pony ; and I'm going to give her my 'John Gilpin' book, and ——" but her sister laughingly interrupted the little girl.

" You will be giving her half of our mother and father and Miss Abitha next, Lamb. Don't give her anything yet. We'll find out something that she wants very much, and then when we get to Pine Tree farm, we will talk it over with grandfather."

" What do you suppose she would rather have than anything in the world ? " asked Lamb.

Constance shook her head. " She hasn't very much," she replied ; " she hasn't any home, or any of the things we have, but she seems just as happy and never seems to want things. I guess she is different from most girls."

" She hasn't any little watch, has she, Sister ? And there's lots of things that she'd like to have, I know she would ! " declared Lamb ; " and I want to give her everything, don't you ? "

Constance nodded, and looked at Lamb affectionately. " Most everything," she replied ; " but I guess I don't want to give her my sister."

That night at the supper-table Miss Wilson announced that as the usual boat-race had not taken place the prizes would have to be voted upon.

"The first prize," she said, holding up a small package, "is in this box, and I will leave it to you girls to decide who is to have it."

"Rose Mason!" "Rose Mason!" exclaimed the girls.

Miss Wilson smiled. "I think you all feel just as I do," she said; "and I am very glad that we agree," and she handed the box to Rose. It contained a small gold pin in the shape of an oar, and when Rose fastened it in her dress, the other girls all exclaimed that it was the best prize possible for a boat-race.

"There are generally four oarsmen in each boat," Miss Wilson reminded them; "so here are three other boxes to be voted on."

"Myrtle Green," exclaimed one of the girls, and Myrtle opened the little box to find a tiny silver anchor.

Constance could hardly believe it possible that the second silver anchor should be declared hers, but she was rejoiced to think that her schoolmates wanted her to have it. The third anchor was voted to a girl who always rowed stroke-oar in one of the boats, and the day of the boat picnic ended very happily.

CHAPTER XVIII

ROSE MASON'S BIRTHDAY

"So we shall have three girls this summer," said Grandfather Newman as he and grandmother talked over the home-coming of Sister and Lamb.

"Yes," responded Mrs. Newman; "and I think we are very fortunate. Rose Mason is a girl to be proud of."

"Just like our 'Peter,'" declared grandfather loyally.

All the household were looking forward to the girls' arrival. Miss Abitha and Jimmie had made plans for an excursion to the camp by the river as soon as possible after Sister and Lamb should reach home.

"We shan't get caught in a snow-storm this time, Jimmie," Miss Abitha had said laughingly; "and now that Constance can row a boat and Lamb has learned to swim, the river will be as safe as dry land."

"I am going to build a boat of my own next winter," said Jimmie. "There's a fine cedar tree on my land, and your father says that he is sure that I can get

enough timber from it for a boat ; and then when the girls come home summers they can have a boat of their own."

On the morning of the day that Constance, Eunice and Rose were to reach home Mr. Eben Bean was very busy. The big three-seated wagon was drawn into the yard and carefully washed. Then the two big horses were groomed and brushed until their smooth coats were like silk. Jimmie rubbed up the harnesses, and when the team was ready Grandfather Newman regarded it approvingly.

Mr. Eben Bean was to drive, and young Mrs. Newman and Abitha sat beside him on the front seat. The middle seat was reserved for the girls, while Mr. Henry Newman and grandmother and grandfather were to ride on the back seat. Jimmie stood at the gate and saw them drive off toward the station.

"They are the best folks in the world," the boy thought gratefully, remembering all the kindness they had shown to his mother, and their generosity toward himself ; "and I'm going to try and be just like Grandfather Newman, and have a nice farm like this," and the boy looked admiringly at the comfortable house and big barns, and thought proudly of his own hard-earned acres on the Franklin road.



THEY TOLD HIM THE STORY

Constance and Lamb could hardly wait for a chance to tell Grandfather Newman about Rose ; and as soon as possible after their arrival they managed to get him all to themselves and told him the story of Constance's falling into the lake, and of how Rose had come to her rescue.

"And, grandfather," Constance continued, "that isn't all, either. If it hadn't been for Rose I should have quarreled with Myrtle Green," and she told about the play they had written, and of Rose planning to make things smooth with Myrtle by giving up their own claim to attention. "And now, grandfather," urged Lamb, "we want to do something lovely for Rose, and we want you to tell us what to do."

Grandfather looked very happy as he listened to their story. "I see, I see," he replied ; "now we must talk this over with your mother and try and find out what Rose would like best of all." Then grandfather was silent a moment. "I think," he remarked slowly, "that the best thing that ever happened to you two girls was when your mother decided to send you to Miss Wilson's school."

"And we were so silly about it," said Constance. "I didn't realize how silly we were until I knew Rose and Myrtle."

That very night Constance found a chance to tell her mother what she had long wanted to say.

"Mother," she exclaimed, as young Mrs. Newman went up-stairs with her little daughters, "weren't you awfully ashamed of me when I ran away and didn't want to go to school?"

Mrs. Newman laughed softly. "Not half so ashamed then as I am proud now," she replied. "Rose has been telling me so many pleasant things about both my dear girls that I can't remember they ever did anything silly."

"We are so sorry, mother, dear," said Lamb, "that we ran away that time, and we just love to go to school, don't we, Sister?"

"We love coming home a good deal better," replied Constance, giving her mother such a vigorous hug that Mrs. Newman declared she understood just how it was that Constance won the basket-ball game.

"We want to give our play right away," said Constance the next morning, and Miss Abitha and Jimmie both promised to help.

"As Jimmie and I are the chief actors," said Miss Abitha, "I suppose we must begin to learn our parts right away."

"Oh, you will know your parts," declared Con-

stance, "because the play is written about your adventures."

Jimmie looked at the cambric lynx with scorn. "That doesn't look like anything," he announced. "I can fix up something that will be a lot more like a wild animal than that," so, with an old buffalo robe which Mr. Bean gave him the boy constructed a very good imitation of a lynx.

Little Mary Woodyear was delighted to take part, and it was decided to give the play the very next week. The platform was built in the shed; grandmother made a fine drop curtain of green cambric, and grandfather made so many benches that Constance said she believed he had asked the whole village.

"Well," he responded laughingly, "I have asked some of our friends to drive over. I've asked the Smiths, and the minister and his wife, and the doctor, and —"

"Oh, grandfather! You've asked everybody!" declared Lamb, and when the evening of the performance came it looked as if Lamb was right, for teams drove up from all the neighboring farms and the village was well represented.

The Woodyear family were all there, proud and happy over the fact that Jimmie's adventure with the

lynx and his experience on the river had been put into a play. Grandfather Newman beamed upon everybody; and Mr. Eben Bean, looking more like "Uncle Sam" than ever, stood at the door and handed each newcomer a little printed book.

"Rose!" exclaimed Constance, "do you see those little books that Mr. Bean is giving everybody? Well, it is our play! Father has had them printed just as Myrtle's father did hers, with your picture and mine on the front page."

The play went very well and received much applause. Miss Abitha and Jimmie seemed very much at home in their parts, and when they were rescued from the storm the audience stamped and applauded with delight.

After the play Grandmother Newman invited the guests to remain for strawberries and cake, and when the evening was over they all declared that it was one of the nicest entertainments they had ever attended. The doctor was heard to say that he should certainly send his daughter to Miss Wilson's school, and the minister praised Rose and Constance.

"Isn't it lovely to have a home like this," said Rose after the visitors had all gone. "I never used to think much about a home, but since I have known Con-

stance and Lamb I have decided that I'd rather have a home than anything in the world."

The two sisters looked at each other. Now they knew what Rose wanted, but how could they give it to her?

"Wouldn't you rather have a little gold watch?" asked Lamb anxiously.

This made both Rose and Constance laugh, and nothing more was said about their friend's wish.

"You can have Jet for your own pony while you are here, Rose," Constance said; "and you needn't think that you must ask either Lamb or me to drive with you. You can go alone, or take anybody."

"I could take the Woodyear children sometimes," suggested Rose.

"Yes," agreed Constance, and so began a happy time for the little Woodyears, for whatever Rose did Constance and Lamb wanted to do, and it became a custom to include the Woodyear children in their drives and picnics.

When the day came for the excursion to the river Jimmie and Mary Woodyear, in the pony cart, drove behind the big wagon. Miss Abitha showed the girls where the bonfire had been built on the night when she and Jimmie had so nearly perished in the storm.

Rose, Constance and Lamb had brought their bathing suits and, although Grandmother Newman insisted that they must not go out beyond where they could walk safely ashore, they could all see that the girls were perfectly at home in the water, and could swim well.

"I wouldn't mind falling out of a boat now," announced Constance; "for I should know just what to do."

"Well, you learned that at school," replied Miss Abitha, and Constance agreed promptly.

Mary Woodyear watched them admiringly. "They can do everything, can't they, Jimmie?" she said.

Jimmie nodded. "'Most everything," he responded, "and they will teach you to do things too."

"Of course they will," declared Constance, who had overheard the conversation. "The very next time I come to the river Mary can come with me and take her first lesson in swimming."

"I guess there's other things she'd like to learn, too," ventured Jimmie.

"What?" responded Constance eagerly, sitting down close beside Mary.

"She'd like to learn things out of books, wouldn't you, Mary?"

"I'd love to teach her," said Constance, and before the talk was finished it was agreed that Mary should come every day to Pine Tree farm and that Constance should be her teacher.

"There!" exclaimed Jimmie as he and Mary rode home that night. "Wasn't that the nicest picnic that ever was? And aren't the Newmans the nicest folks?"

"Yes!" replied his small sister. "And I'm going to be just like them."

"So am I," declared Jimmie.

"Sister," said Lamb one day toward the end of the summer, "vacation is almost over and we haven't given Rose a single thing; and every time we ask grandfather about it he just smiles and nods; and now her birthday comes next week and nobody seems to be planning for it," and the little girl was evidently nearly ready to cry.

"Grandmother is making her a lovely birthday cake," replied Constance; "and it is going to have a big sugar rose on top of it."

"What's a cake?" wailed Lamb.

"And Miss Abitha is making her the prettiest pink muslin dress," continued Constance.

"Well, everybody has muslin dresses. And what are we going to give her? We know what she wants

most of anything, but we can't get it for her. I do wish she wanted a watch. I know father would buy one for her," declared Lamb.

"Well, Eunice, I'll tell you. Father has bought her a watch. And it's got a rose engraved on the back, and on the inside of the case is 'Rose from Constance and Eunice.' You ask father to show it to you."

"Goody!" exclaimed the little girl, and her face brightened. "But that isn't giving her what she wants most," she concluded rather dismally.

"My first birthday cake!" Rose exclaimed happily, as they all gathered about the table for her birthday supper.

"And your first watch," said Lamb, slipping a slender chain over Rose's neck and letting the tiny watch swing in front of her. Then, after Rose had admired her new gift, Grandfather Newman got up from his seat at the foot of the table and came over and stood between Rose and Constance.

"Now," he said very quietly, "I am going to make you a present, my dear Rose, and I hope you will accept it. I am going to present you with a grandfather and a grandmother and a home. You are always to feel that you have a share in Pine Tree farm, that you are just as welcome here as either Constance or Lamb;

that this is your home," and he leaned over and kissed Rose.

"There!" exclaimed Lamb. "Now Rose has what she wanted most in the world, a real home."

"And all because you came to Miss Wilson's school," replied Rose.

Constance looked at her friend. "It almost frightens me," she said soberly, "when I think that we didn't want to go to school. Just think of all we would have missed! And missing you, Rose, would have been the worst of all."

Rose laughed happily. "This is my best birthday yet," she said. "I don't believe any other girl ever had everything she wanted given to her on her sixteenth birthday," and she turned a grateful look toward the happy faces that regarded her with so much affection.

"And all because Sister and I went to school," announced Lamb, so seriously that they all laughed at the little girl's sober face.

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